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PARTNERS IN LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER EDUCATION:
A SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

BY

©

JILL KEDERSHA McCLAY

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled PARTNERS IN LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER EDUCATION: A SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION submitted by JILL KEDERSHA McCLAY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this ethnography of a school-university collaboration in language arts teacher education were to evoke the culture created by participants, to learn how participants viewed roles of teachers and learners, and to discover their understandings of learning and teaching language arts. In this partnership, language arts curriculum-and-instruction courses are taught in an elementary/junior high school advocating a language-for-learning philosophy; the university professor and school teachers structure and mediate non-evaluated, individual and small-group teaching experiences for education students. Education students each work with several teachers to plan, teach, and evaluate mini-units and to work in writers workshops. They learn a theoretical foundation, experience learning about writing through journals and writers workshop, and interact with children in an environment explicitly valuing language for learning.

Participants in this study were the English education professor, school teachers and administrators, and education students. The methodology was researcher participation and observation, with additional data obtained from participants' journals, writing assignments, audiotaped individual and group interviews, and writing conferences. Additional observations and interviews occurred during and after a subsequent practicum.

Findings affirmed the values of multiple models of teachers to learn process approaches in language arts, the use of language in many forms for learning, non-evaluated small-group and individual teaching before evaluated full-class teaching, lifelong learning, and mediated learning experiences. Education students were welcomed into a supportive professional community rejecting traditional school-university dichotomies. They learned to consider pedagogical implications of individual differences. Understanding the importance of structuring teaching in student-centred ways to develop opportunities to use language for learning, they acted as change agents in subsequent practica where such opportunities were rare. Benefits to school teachers included professional development within classrooms and the educational community.

Implications for school-university partnerships for educational improvement in both locales were considered by examining this partnership, which in its third year was moving from cooperation to collaboration with shared goals and ownership. As context is a powerful mediator of knowledge, such partnerships allow integrated learning of theory in genuine teaching contexts.

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The roles of a doctoral advisor include at various times philosopher and management consultant, intellectual guide and trail companion, devil's advocate and guardian angel, sounding board and depth-detector, among others. John Oster's talent as an advisor is knowing which role is needed on a given day; I am extremely grateful for his expertise in shaping this work.

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My daughters Jessica and Elise teach me every day about the powers and pleasures of language. During the course of my research, Jessie learned to read and Elise learned to talk. I dedicate this work to them and to the memory of my father, James Kedersha, Sr.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I: CONTEXTS

Overview 1

Chapter 1: Context in Teacher Education and Language Arts Education 4

- Teacher Education Programs 4
- The Initial Interviews with Education Students 7
  - Personal and professional growth 9
  - Lack of pressure 11
  - Many models 14
  - A sense of community 19
  - Students' perspectives on the impact of the courses 20
  - Suggestions for the improvement of the courses 21
  - Influence on the subsequent practicum 21
- Perspective of Language Arts Education 24
- Expanding the Research Focus 34

Chapter 2: Context for Research 36

- Design of the Study 38
  - Purpose 38
  - Methodology 39
  - Procedures 42
  - Boundaries 46
- Ethical Considerations 47
  - Who's telling whose story? 48
  - Reciprocity and anonymity 50
- Language Considerations 53
  - Language and style 53
  - Discussion of data 56

Chapter 3: Context of the McKernan Project 58

- Developing a Language-for-Learning Partnership 58
- Planning 62

- Organization of the First Three Years of the Project 64
  - Scheduling 64
  - Work with teachers and students 66
- Teachers Talk about Their Involvement 67
  - Contributing to teacher education 67
  - Gerry Bell: "I also want them to see this joy" 69
  - Florence Iftody: "'Hands-on' experiences with children" 72
  - Stuart Capstick: "A good place to start" 74
  - Don Garry: ". . . suddenly a bond was forming" 77

Chapter 4: Context for the Education Students 80

- Composition of the Class 80
- Pre-course Thoughts on Teaching Language Arts 82
  - Question one 82
  - Question two 85
  - Question three 86
- Assignments for the Courses 87
- The Courses On-Campus 90
  - Language usage 91
  - Visit from McKernan administrators 92

PART II: NARRATIVES

Overview 96

Chapter 5: Beginnings 99

- Scheduling 99
- McKernan Activities 102
- Welcome to McKernan 103
- The Staff Room 107

Chapter 6: Working with Children and Teachers at McKernan School 111

- "Fables" groups 111
  - The assignment 111
  - The introduction 112
  - Annette: ". . . did I ever learn a lot" 113
  - Arlene: A lesson in planning 113
  - From Arlene's portfolio: "That Skittish Day" 114

"Sentence Demons" Groups 116
  The assignment 116
  Jill: Participant role 117
  Sharon and Laurie and parallelism 119
  Whose "Demon" is this, anyway? 122
  Kate: "Capitalizing on each individual's strength" 124
  Ruth: "They were all excited about what was happening" 125
  Performance! Robin's "Sentence Fragment Demon" 128
  Performance and the "demon" of evaluation 130
  Anya: Getting to know the students 131
  Betty: The ultimate responsibility for the project 132
"Appearance and Reality" Groups 133
  The assignment 133
  Planning problems: Appearance or reality? 135
    Day one 135
    Day two 136
  Ruth's story: "All of us are so different" 141
  Kate's story: "We've got something new to share with each other every day" 143
  Teaching the "appearance and reality" mini-unit 144
    The group's success 144
    Kate's dilemma 145
    The individual planners 149
Readers Theatre 151
  Grade 6 151
  Education students perform their readers theatre script 153
Writers Workshops 159
  The assignments 159
  Don's role as writing teacher 162
  Barbara and Ashley freewrite together 163
  Ursula: Talking and writing about the class trip 166
  Edith: "The workshop has an atmosphere uniquely its own" 167
  Annette: On being a human being 168
  Amanda: "Zig zagging" 169
  Kate's concrete poems 172
Deconstructing Walls and Assumptions: Conversations with Dave 176
The Culture of the McKernan Project 182

Chapter 7: Voices from Student Teaching 185

Callbacks, Synthesis, and Observations 185
Annette: Asking Questions about Writing 188
Dave: Taking Risks 191

Arlene: Being Herself in the Classroom 197
Consonance 200
Workloads 202
Judy: Dissonance and the Question of Conformity 203
Robin: Negative and Positive Models 207
Consonance and Dissonance in Writers Workshops 209
Michael: Facing Contradictions 211
Synthesis 214

PART III: PERSPECTIVES

Overview 216

Chapter 8: Being a Teacher, Being an English Language Arts Teacher 218

- Roles and Metaphors for Teaching 218
  - Being "at the edges" and "in the middle" 219
    - Barbara: Being a student, becoming a teacher 221
    - Life "in the middle" with students 223
    - Life "in the middle" for McKernan teachers 225
  - Understanding self and others as teachers 226
    - Feeling comfortable as "the teacher": trail guides and moths 227
    - McKernan teachers: Magicians and professional community 229
    - Marg: Integrating language arts instruction, sharing "turf," and throwing pebbles 230
    - Jill: Researching the researcher 237
- Language and Learning 239
  - Expressive talk 239
  - Writing 243
    - Journals 243
    - Portfolios 245
- Student-Centred Teaching and Learning 249
  - Perceptions of student differences 249
  - Learning about individuals 250
  - Categorical and contextual differences 252
  - Learning about learners 253
  - Ironies of a "non-pressured" situation 255
  - Planning and organizing for diversity 257
    - Organizing groups 258
    - Organizing writers workshops 260

Chapter 9: Teacher Education 263

- Re-forming Teacher Education 263
- School and University Partnerships 270
  - Potential for educational improvements 270
  - Partnership concerns 275
  - Cooperation and/or collaboration 280
- Pedagogy of Language Arts Education 282

Chapter 10: Vistas 285

- Implications for the Education of Language Arts Teachers 286
- Recommendations for Further Research 293
- Vistas: From the High Ground to the Swamp and Back Again 296

Bibliography 297

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Annette's poem, "Along the Way." 170
Figure 2. Kate's poem, "STUDENT TEACHER" 173
Figure 3. Robin's poem, "Student Teacher" 175

PART I

CONTEXTS

Overview

> In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of the greatest human concern.
>
> (Schön, 1987, p.3)

Donald Schön's metaphor of the high, hard ground and the swampy lowland vividly illustrates the two locales of traditional teacher education programs: the university's high, hard ground for courses in education and the school's swampy lowland for the "real world" of teaching. In the confusion of the lowland, education students often dismiss their previous experiences on the high ground as irrelevant, but this rejection leaves them to cope without benefit of the larger and "cleaner" view afforded by the high ground.

In recent years some universities and schools have begun to collaborate to build bridges between the high ground and the lowland, between the two settings of theory and practice. Since January, 1988, Dr. Margaret Iveson's integrated language arts education courses "Teaching English Language Arts in the Secondary School I and II" have been situated in part at McKernan Elementary/Junior High School in Edmonton, Alberta. There the university professor and language arts teachers together provide education students with opportunities to work with teachers and junior high school students one-on-one and in small groups. They "shadow" a student for a day; they chat and work with, question and get to know the participating teachers; they plan, and teach mini-units for small groups of students; they work with students individually in a writers workshop; they evaluate students' written and oral work; and they discuss with their university instructor and the school teachers the connections between their experiences at McKernan School and their course readings in language arts education. The curriculum-and-instruction courses are precursors to, not substitutes for, the final practicum; they conspicuously lack some of the traditional characteristics of the practicum, such as detailed evaluations of full-class teaching performances and close contact with one cooperating teacher.

My research is an ethnographic study of the culture created by the participants in this project during the Fall term, 1989. In attempting to evoke the culture that the participants create, I more specifically sought to discover how they perceived their roles and what they learned about the teaching and learning of English language arts. My research questions and methodology for the study developed from initial interviews in April, 1989, in which I spoke with nine education students who had participated in the McKernan project that term to learn what they had experienced when they ventured "into the swamp" with their professor. These initial interviews encouraged my interest in the project and helped me clarify and expand my research focus.

In Part I "Contexts," the various contexts of my research and the McKernan project are discussed, beginning in Chapter 1 with "Context in Teacher Education and Language Arts Education." This context will examine relevant research literature in terms of the initial interviews I conducted, as the experiences of these education students highlight not only the common issues of teacher education, but also the alternative possibilities in teacher education that such projects as the McKernan project offer. Chapter 2 "Context for Research" presents the design and intentions of the research I structured after completing the initial interviews. Chapter 3 focuses on the "Context of the McKernan Project" itself. Through interviews with Dr. Margaret Iveson and McKernan School principal Don Vinge, as the primary catalysts of the project, and the McKernan language arts teachers as collaborators, I provide a short history of the genesis of the collaboration and a discussion of the intentions of the teachers for the organization of the project for the term of my study. The final context examined is that of the education students who enrolled in the curriculum-and-instruction courses in September, 1989. In Chapter 4 "Context for Education Students," I discuss their initial thoughts about teaching language arts before they began the term's work, their course requirements, and their introduction to their work at McKernan School.

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE ARTS EDUCATION

Teacher Education Programs

In recent years calls for educational reform and reconceptualization have become commonplace among educators and such influential social-study foundations as the Carnegie Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. These calls for reform stress the failures of the American educational systems and signal teacher education programs as both a cause of the perpetuation of lackluster or counterproductive teaching practices and a key component of any program of reform and improvement of the teaching profession and of schooling in general (A Nation at Risk, 1983; Boyer, 1983). While the virtues and failings of the Canadian educational systems are not necessarily identical to those of the United States, the trends in both countries have followed similar paths.

In A Place Called School (1984), John Goodlad reports on an astonishingly comprehensive study of education. In scope, depth, and methodology it arguably has no equal in our time period, and Goodlad's report lucidly examines the status quo as well as his vision of potential improvements and reconceptualizations of all levels of education. In its reportage of the status quo of contemporary schooling, the study largely concurs with such reports as A Nation at Risk in its view that a crisis exists in the educational systems' failure to educate children to participate in and sustain the foundations of democracy. While documenting problems and frustrations in depth, the study also focuses upon individual schools in which the challenges of contemporary democratic society are being met straightforwardly and positively, to the satisfaction of students, parents, teachers, and administrators alike. It is these positively oriented schools which cause Goodlad to focus upon the individual school as the unit of change and improvement in educational systems:

> One of the major messages of this report is that improvement is essentially a school-by-school process, enlightened by the degree to which those associated with each school and trying to improve it have the data required for building a useful agenda.
> (1984, p.9)

However, he also calls for improvements in and reconceptualizations of the roles of all interested participants in education, including state educational authorities, business and industrial groups, and, obviously, universities and faculties of education.

Goodlad's study of teacher education programs in the United States led to his conclusion that "teacher education programs are disturbingly alike and almost uniformly inadequate" (1984, p.315). This sweeping indictment is contextualized within a framework of university structures and traditions which impede or thwart optimal functioning of teacher education faculties. Goodlad condemns the university traditions which perpetuate a general indifference to education faculties; the structures which drive wedges between subject departments and faculties of education, leaving education professors cut off from subject area research unless they individually transcend organizational limitations; and the expectations for research in leading universities which work against a commitment to teacher education. He quotes facetiously the fictitous dean of education who noted that his school's commitment "is to study teacher education, not work at it" (p.315). Patterson and Miklos (1987) concur with this judgment that the university structure and tradition work against faculties of education, while noting the irony that the incorporation of teacher preparation programs from the normal school into the Canadian university structure was heralded as an advance for professional teacher preparation.

Goodlad (1984) sees as a major failure of teacher education programs their ineffectiveness at preparing teachers who can or will break the mold of the outworn pedagogical practices his team observed. Although Goodlad does not frame this argument in terms of a theory/practice gap, it may be seen as such, and Goodlad documents that theory as taught in universities does not influence much practice in the schools. This failure is supported by the teachers themselves whose ratings of their backgrounds show that they perceive their shortcomings to lie more in the area of pedagogy than in academic background. Goodlad addresses this perception by calling for closer attention to the nature of learning a particular subject:

> It may be, then, that a gap exists in teacher preparation programs. This is a gap to be closed by more attention to the composite implications for teaching of how students learn and how subjects are structured. This relationship between the nature of learning and the nature of specific subject-matter domains was of great interest among the curriculum reformers of the late 1950s and throughout much of the 1960s. (p.183)

Goodlad calls for an integrated approach to solving many problems of contemporary schooling, an approach in which individual schools and universities collaborate in the preparation of beginning teachers and in professional development and curriculum education for experienced teachers. His recommendations include separating beginning teachers from the "primitive or outworn techniques of their predecessors" (p.315). By apprenticing student teachers to practitioners of outworn techniques, we "assure perpetuation of the very things we want teacher education programs to change" (p.316). He calls for educators to break this destructive cycle by having institutions of teacher education join with excellent school districts to designate key or demonstration schools. University faculty who are oriented to research and development in school organization, curriculum, and teaching should be provided facilities in these schools for research and sharing of their expertise. For student teachers, Goodlad calls for

> . . . guided observation and practice only in key and demonstration schools working in collaboration with teacher preparing institutions. The education of beginning teachers, development of experienced teachers, and school improvement go hand-in-hand. (p.319)

Aware of the problems of practicum experiences which can degenerate into little more than apprenticeships for student teachers, many teacher educators have turned to other models of professional preparation to break the cycle of mediocrity created when theory and practice are not mutually supportive. Donald Schön's (1987) idea of the "reflective practitioner," developed for any professional education in which the workplace reality is characterized by uniqueness, uncertainty, and values conflicts, has provided a model that many teacher educators find appropriate. His view of "coaching" rather than "apprenticeship" supports Goodlad's call for guided observation and practice.

The Initial Interviews with Education Students

The school-based part of the curriculum-and-instruction courses of Dr. Margaret Iveson seems to accord well with these recommendations for changes in the traditional structure of teacher preparation courses. She has established a working relationship with one school which holds a language-for-learning philosophy that is harmonious with current thinking in language arts education; with the school staff, she helps to guide the observations and experiences of the education students; and in venturing into "the swamp" with her students, she has the opportunity to help students find a consistency between the theory they read about and the practice they begin to experience.

When I approached Marg Iveson about interviewing some of her students regarding their perceptions of their work at McKernan School, she enthusiastically agreed to cooperate. She also wanted to find out more about her students' learning. I spoke with her class, explaining my interest in alternatives to traditionally-structured teacher education programs, and requested volunteers to interview. More than fifteen students volunteered, but I limited my group to ten, one of whom did not attend the session. I spoke with the other nine volunteers (seven female, two male) of the twenty-five member class. The interviews occurred after the completion of the eight-week student teaching practicum in April, 1989. Eight students met with me as a group; the ninth met with me privately the following week. I will discuss the themes which emerged from these interviews in the context of the literature of teacher education and language arts education, focusing upon the education students' thoughts regarding their personal and professional growth during their McKernan work and its influence upon their subsequent practicum.

My intentions were to discover what work and learning occurred among these education students at McKernan and whether their experiences related to prominent themes and issues in language arts and teacher education. My questions for the initial interviews were broad; I asked what they had experienced at McKernan School, what strengths the project offered them, and what suggestions they could make for improvement of the project. The discussion proceeded in a rather zigzag fashion, as the participants' enthusiasm led to laughter and digressions. I encouraged these digressions in the conversation, as they provided valuable threads from which my initial ideas and subsequent research are woven. In reporting upon the interviews, I quote extensively from the students, as the vitality, passion, and humour of their voices speak more eloquently than my reportage. The nine education students gave permission to use their tape-recorded comments in my work, and I have used pseudonyms for them to provide anonymity. Their comments encouraged my interest in this school-university partnership as I found that their experiences and perceptions spoke to the broad concerns of language arts teacher education. These initial interviews provided valuable threads from which I later wove my research questions.

Personal and professional growth

The notion of personal growth is inseparable from professional growth, especially for beginning teachers. While all neophyte professionals must attempt to define themselves within acceptable parameters of their specialization's definition of "professional," the task is doubly hard for neophyte teachers. They spend fifteen years or more in the role of "student" before making the transition to "teacher," and the struggle to define themselves as professional teachers is coloured by these experiences as students. Thus, the professional growth experienced by the education students who participated in my interviews was inextricably linked to their personal growth and to the connections they saw between their own values and goals and the demands they perceived of as stemming from their profession. This link manifested itself in much of the conversation, as they explicitly tapped into their memories from student days and implicitly or explicitly measured themselves against the professionals they encountered at McKernan School and in their practica. The personal-professional link was the underlying theme of most of the conversation.

In the literature of teacher education, the education student's process of growth into the role of teacher is shown to be a primary concern of student teachers, a concern which must take priority over other classroom matters (Tardif, 1985). Clearly, a neophyte teacher is expected to adopt the role of "teacher," but unless opportunities are provided for this gradual transition, the beginning teacher is left to play-act the role until such time as it begins to feel comfortable. As school children are remarkably adept at detecting such deception, the beginning teacher's discomfort is often exposed and the authority which he or she is trying so hard to establish is undermined.

This priority of growth into the teacher role is especially difficult for student teachers to resolve given their lack of real status in some cooperating teachers' classrooms. MacKinnon (1989) discusses the problems of student teachers who exist in a limbo, neither in a student-role nor a teacher-role despite the expectation that they behave as teachers. Through the McKernan experience, however, the very "in-between-ness" of the education students' situation seems to work to their advantage, as one student noted positively:

> At McKernan you're not teaching [a full class], and you're meeting with kids on a one-to-one basis. You're on a different level--you're a university student. You're not even a student teacher, you're not anything, just a university student.
>
> (Nicole)

With this freedom from role expectation (from teachers as well as students), the education students explored the roles of the teacher, and they began to come to terms with personal aspects of becoming a teacher. The self-doubts of beginning teachers stem partly from insecurity about oneself--"Can I see myself 'being' the teacher, doing the things that teachers are supposed to do?"--and partly from insecurity about the students they are assigned to teach--"How can I teach people whom I don't understand?" These aspects of personal growth and understanding were addressed implicitly in the McKernan experience, while ironically, the previous phase of student teaching seemed to have intensified some students' feelings of insecurity and/or incompatibility with the teacher role.

> Being an after-degree student, this is my first year in Education generally. . . . I was thrown into my first practicum with no previous experience in a school except for being a student at that level. And so by the time I had got to McKernan in January, I had been four weeks in the practicum as a teacher, was still feeling quite shaky about the whole thing: Do I really want to be in this Faculty? Do I really want to do this? McKernan . . . was a really big boost for my confidence. . . . By the time I got to my eight-week practicum, I found myself far more confident and knowing that perhaps this was something that I really did enjoy and could be of benefit to someone else.
> (Joan)

Lack of pressure

Given this need to grow into comfortable roles as teachers, one feature of the McKernan experience proved particularly conducive to this task. The education students spoke unanimously and enthusiastically about the lack of performance pressure upon them. They worked with individual children and with small groups but did not teach full-class lessons, nor were they evaluated for their teaching. In these two aspects the McKernan experience differed markedly from student teaching, providing a difference which fostered growth and reflection that are not commonly encouraged by the intense pressure of evaluation in practicum situations.

The lack of performance pressure allowed the education students to focus on and come to know the children as individuals and as a group. The feeling of remoteness from the junior-high child and the school system was common to students regardless of their age or distance in years from the junior high.

> These guys [her colleagues] have been out of school for a few years. I've been out of school a long time, and the students are much closer to my child's age than to my age, and I had a lot of questions as to what they were like. . . . There was a bit of adjusting to do there, and I didn't have that chance in the first round before Christmas. I was just there and everything was on the line all the time.
>
> (Shell)

> One of the biggest things that I experienced at McKernan was the opportunity to be involved with the students and to see the dynamics of the school in action, the dynamics of the classroom in action, without being confronted with all of these students en masse by myself with only book knowledge in hand. You were able to be a part of what was going on, a part of what was happening, and build that confidence just by being there without being confronted by 25 or 30 students at one time.
>
> (Brooke)

The "shadow" day, in which education students were each assigned to follow along the daily schedule with a junior high student, afforded Alice an opportunity to begin to understand a student from "the other crowd" than she had been in during her own school days. Talking with her "shadow" partner, who was suspended from a class, she made important discoveries about adolescents:

> We had fun talking about a million different things, and I asked him a lot of questions. . . . It sort of made some of the [drug] problems that we talk about junior high kids as having that much more real to me, . . . knowing that he thought about these things, and he thought about them in terms of long-term consequences, and that you can expect students of junior high age to think about principles in terms of cause and effect. And if you can ask them the right kinds of questions or challenge them in certain ways, they are capable of making wise decisions, they don't have to just run with the crowd. A lot of them can be capable of that.
>
> (Alice)

The "shadow" day was significant for others as well, in affording them the opportunity and perhaps the leisure to delve into their memories of their own schooling. By recalling their junior high days, they made empathic connections with the junior high children at McKernan. By simultaneously empathizing with and differentiating from the children, the education students seemed to be growing more comfortable in their roles as teachers.

> When I was in junior high, I spent so much time trying to act like an adult that I have no idea what I was really doing. And being in the junior high, especially the day we shadowed, really helped, because it pulled out memories that were lost, and it just gave me more of a sense of what it was like.
>
> (Shell)

As they developed understandings of the junior high students, the education students began to think about how to teach them language arts. They focused upon the teaching and learning of individuals, a focus which student teachers and beginning teachers in full-class settings often cannot maintain (Everett Turner, 1985).

> And all of this happened without the pressure of being evaluated. No one's sitting at the back of the room taking notes on what you're saying to kids. . . . The most we worked with was maybe six or seven kids at a time, but working with these kids you didn't have to worry about somebody standing over you and looking at what you're doing. You could concentrate on what the kids were actually like, what you were doing with them, how it was going, and if it didn't work well, well, afterwards there was no big pressure about it.
>
> (Henry)

> Until December, I was more qualified to teach in university junior English classes than to teach in the school, in junior high. How do you explain to kids on their level what theme is? You can go into this long explanation about what theme is from what you know at university to kids in grade 8 and in two minutes--they're just lost.
>
> (Nicole)

Because they did not teach full-class groups, the students were free from the primary preoccupation of most student teachers and beginning teachers: the need to maintain class discipline (Everett Turner, 1985). By teaching small groups, the education students could focus upon the children and how to teach them rather than on crowd control. This focus was an inversion of a common contradiction of teacher education: experienced teachers know that class management and discipline become easier after the teacher has developed some finesse in relating to students and in discovering how to teach them. But student teachers are expected to learn how to "control" a class before they have an idea about who the students are and/or how to teach them.

> It was a big boost for my confidence because we worked . . . one-on-one with a student, two-on-two. I worked with a fable group which had five kids in it, so it was a variety of things. No discipline problems, no off-task behaviour because I was right there to help them and it was very high motivation for them as well as for me. (Joan)

> [I]f you were out on your practicum with your lesson plan and it wasn't going right, I know if my [cooperating] teacher were in the back of the room with the lesson plan in hand, I wouldn't dare change in the middle of the stream--'No, this lesson plan HAS to work!'--and you force it through. Partly it's stage fright, too; you're up there and you can't think really creatively when you're up in front of 30 people--I couldn't. So the experience is good at McKernan--altering without the pressure.
>
> (Henry)

Many models

Another feature of the McKernan experience which sets it apart from most practicum experiences is the exposure of the education students to many styles and methods of teachers. As Alice noted, "It was a smorgasbord of new ideas." They learned firsthand that many styles and methods can be accommodated within a philosophic framework that binds a school together, and, perhaps more importantly, they learned (implicitly or explicitly) that teaching styles and methods are indeed indicative of a philosophic stance.

> [W]e had . . . many teachers whom we watched, all of whom were supposed to be doing student-centred teaching, but they all had different personalities and I felt they were all extremely different. And just that awareness of how such very different individuals could teach--and my feeling was that they were all teaching very differently--yet they were all doing approximately the same thing. They were all getting the kids comfortable and the kids were all working well despite these variations in attitude--I think that helped a lot, because the teacher I had for my first practicum was much more of a traditional-oriented teacher, and the one I've had that I just came back from is also pretty traditional in a lot of ways, and it just gave me a better idea of how much disparity there could be.
>
> (Shell)

The practicum experience, with the student teacher assigned to one cooperating teacher whose evaluation critically influences the student's employment possibilities, poses an almost insurmountable pressure to conform. MacKinnon (1989) details the perceptions of student teachers whose practicum experiences led them to feel jaded; after several weeks they lost even the inclination to resist conforming to their cooperating teachers' methods and beliefs. Schön writes of the "overlearning" that may occur when the student sees only one view or way of doing something; he or she is more likely to become too much of a "true believer" in this method, seeing it as the only method (1987, p.169). This pre-practicum experience at McKernan eliminated the need for conformity, either extrinsic or intrinsic, at this level of exposure to the classroom, freeing the students to observe, try out, and analyze various methods. It did not, of course, relieve the pressure for conformity during the practicum, but at least it offered them opportunities for growth and experimentation before the evaluative situation. Thus it provided a more sequential structuring of their program, as called for by Horowitz (1974); indeed, it is odd that one of the basic tenets of teaching/learning theory--that one must be given real opportunities to practice before one's mastery is evaluated--normally is not more systematically practiced in the structure of the teacher education program.

This exposure to many styles and methods of teaching is essential for the growth of the education student into his or her role as teacher. In the traditional practicum, the cooperating teacher exerts a strong influence over the student's professional development: what are the chances of this role model being the "right" one for a given student? We learn many diverse lessons in life from many people--surely the same must be true in our professional lives. In addition, without intending to denigrate teachers, we must acknowledge that some students are assigned to less-than--exemplary cooperating teachers who are ill-prepared to supervise professional development. Jones (1988) cites the lack of trained supervisors in schools and universities as primary obstacles to successful practicum experiences. Even assuming that the majority of cooperating teachers are positive examples to their students, the chances are haphazard at best for an optimum matching of styles, philosophies, and working and learning patterns that would help the student teacher to receive all possible assistance. The exposure to a wide variety of models seems essential at the pre-practicum phase. During the subsequent practicum, students will be better able to understand the uniqueness of the cooperating teacher and school and to understand how that unique teacher and school fit into the overall practice in current education. This perspective is even more critical in cases where the student encounters an incompatible model during practicum:

> I just had an 8-week nightmare experience [in student teaching], and . . . if I hadn't had McKernan at the beginning of the semester, that would have killed it. I would have said that would be the END. And I'd just say, "Thank you very much, I don't like what I've seen in either practicum. I don't like the kind of person that they're setting me up to be, because that's all

> I've seen." So I think the broader the experience you can have, in a practical sense, that they can manage within the semester at university, the better it is. (Joan)

Obviously the McKernan experience was crucial to this student whose cooperating teacher's philosophy was incompatible with her own. She would have felt that there was no place in teaching for the kind of teacher she wanted to become. With the example of the diversity of the McKernan staff, however, this student was able to uphold the idea that the kind of teacher she wanted to be is indeed present and valued in the current educational system. This reassurance is critical to the beginning teacher as well as to the student teacher, as Veenman (1984) reports studies in which beginning teachers identify external pressure as the cause of their adoption of more authoritarian methods than they prefer to use.

But the McKernan teachers were more important than mere examples of diversity. They provided role models of active, problem-solving, risk-taking professionals willing to question, be questioned about, and try new methods. The students had nothing but praise for the staff with whom they worked.

> The writers' workshop . . . was very valuable to me because if I would have just read about it, I would never ever have tried it. I think maybe later on in my teaching career I would have, but now I'm excited about trying it. I see it can work. The first time they [two of the language arts teachers] ever did [writers workshop] was this year. So you actually got to see them struggling through it for the first time, and you saw that it could work. You saw the problems that they ran into and how they solved them, and it gave you a lot of confidence and reassurance that, yeah, I can go out and I can try this too. And Stuart [a teacher] said . . .that it was nice that we were out there working because we were asking questions of him about the writers workshop, and he had to justify it for himself. He had to work through it himself saying, "Why am I teaching it? Why am I doing it this way, and what are the kids learning?" He said we reassured him of the fact that this was an excellent way of teaching

> students. And that helped us to see it as well, talking with him about the whole process, and it was really valuable.
>
> (Nicole)

The example of problem-solving was well set and will result in more effects than the adoption of one particular method for this student. She took it as a model of problem-solving to inspire her in future classroom ventures.

The example of professional teachers who are actively engaged in professional development by trying out new methods and by reading professional literature, as well as the success of the methods being adopted by the teachers, encouraged the education students to consider what additional knowledge or experience would assist their own professional development. The McKernan teachers were using Nancie Atwell's In the Middle (1987) as the basis of their writing workshop program; some of the education students also took the initiative to read the book while at McKernan. The students could see the creative and pedagogical possibilities of their professional development.

> I am not a creative writer at all, and the thing is that one of the things we talked about and witnessed at McKernan is that kids write creatively for themselves because they enjoy it. It's the kind of thing that's intrinsic and is in everybody. So I figure if I'm going to teach this, I have to know how to do it, and I have to know what sort of processes writers go through and the best way to do that is to try to BE a writer. How can you even mark creative writing if you don't know what steps a person goes through or what goes into it? (Lauren)

Education administrators who grapple with the problems of motivating professional development have learned the futility of "top-down" organized activities. Dawson (1978) advises that the most useful and effective (in terms of changes in classroom behaviour) professional development is that which is initiated by the individual teacher who perceives a need for more knowledge. The staff at McKernan provided models of teachers as continual learners, and the students not only adopted that stance but also began to recognize areas important to their own development. One impressive feature of this recognition was that it was pedagogically-based, as demonstrated by the students' interest in learning more about writing process and readers theatre.

A sense of community

The students discussed with obvious pleasure the sense of community that bound them together in this shared experience. Moreover, and more essentially, they appreciated the confirmation of shared values, such as respect for children as "growing and evolving beings" (in Shell's phrase), that came from the group, as well as the professional benefit from this association:

> I think this is the first group of people that I've ever really gotten to know in my four years of university. . . . In this class I feel like there are people I could in my first year of teaching phone up and say, "You did this unit on such and such. I need "HELP!" I mean, you have partners in teaching here. I think that McKernan experience pulled us together.
> (Henry)

As the students puzzled through some of the reasons for the intensity of the feeling of community, it struck me as a "team spirit" similar to that described by the students of other intensive experiences, such as the project MEET group at McGill (Horowitz, 1974) and the ethos of the normal school (Patterson, 1987). This very intensity and "setting apart" from their normal associations and activities may have helped them to form a bond leading to a sustained and supportive network as they left the university to begin their professional lives.

The community and potential future network formed by the students was complemented by the sense of belonging to the professional community established at McKernan. They noted the openness of the teachers:

> I often felt that we were getting a secret, inside view of how they run their teaching practice. I felt so honoured all the time because they were being so honest with us, so open, and all the teachers shared this and that with us. That was a real privilege.
>
> (Alice)

Students' perspectives on the impact of the courses

From the perspectives of the education students, the school-based curriculum-and-instruction courses were a critical factor in their growth and development as teachers. Three noted that their discouragement from the practicum experiences would probably have led them to leave teaching if not for their time at McKernan. Their distaste for the view of teaching they saw during the practicum was eloquent testament to the course's effect:

> If I didn't have the McKernan experience, a. I don't know if I would be teaching, if I would have kept on and chosen to teach; b. I would be a completely different teacher right now. [General agreement] I would be a completely different teacher. . . . I would be very traditional. I would have set up a grammar unit, I would have given out grammar handouts, because this is what I learned in language arts. And this is the whole school, the whole English department there. It wasn't just one individual. I couldn't even see any other examples of teaching.
>
> (Nicole)

Henry voiced a note of frustration, endorsed by his peers, in commenting that he wished the McKernan experience had come earlier in his Education program. His call for more and earlier experiences echoes the calls of practicing teachers in Alberta who assessed their preservice education programs; they felt that while the university prepared them well for certain aspects of teaching (aspects they ranked as relatively unimportant), they learned the essentials of teaching during the practica. They believed that more practicum experiences would have strengthened their preparation for teaching (Miklos and Greene, 1987).

Suggestions for the improvement of the courses

The students were so enthusiastic about their experiences at McKernan that I felt obligated to prompt them for problems or suggestions for the improvement of the course. Their responses focused on fairly minor aspects of the course. Students agreed that the assignment load was heavy, though they joked that this was preparation for the heavier workloads of practicum. Other suggestions were fairly individual: one student recalled teaching a lesson plan he would have preferred to teach in a different manner, and one wanted more time with one group of children rather than changing groups after a week.

Influence on the subsequent practicum

The education students felt that their time at McKernan strongly influenced their subsequent practicum experiences. This influence was discussed explicitly, but as the conversation progressed, I was most struck by the confidence the students seemed to have in the ideas and attitudes they had formed or confirmed while at McKernan. Their experiences at McKernan gave them the confidence to challenge the status quo in their practicum schools and to initiate new methods when given the opportunity. Thus, whether or not the practicum was a positive learning experience, the preceding curriculum course was influential: those students who were not in a positive learning environment grasped the course as a reminder of other viable ways and possibilities for teachers, and those who were in a positive learning environment were empowered by the course to take whatever initiatives were available to them and to confirm their previous learning. Four students spoke of having initiated activities, such as peer editing, response journals, writers' workshop and anthologies, which the cooperating teachers did not have in place previously, with the cooperating teachers seemingly intent upon continuing the activities after the student teachers' departures. Brooke's comments were typical of these students:

> It gave you the courage to try it, because you had actually had the experience. . . . My cooperating teachers--neither had done very much group work because they hadn't been taught that and they were resistant to the idea. They were intrigued with the idea, but they wanted to see it in action first. Well, I had that experience already, and it gave me the confidence to try it. Now, BOTH of my cooperating teachers are saying, "After you go, we are keeping writers workshop." They have also discovered that group work really does work . . . and that the kids responded really well to it, particularly one class that was a so-called bad class. This is, I believe, a direct spin-off from my experience at McKernan because if I had just read about writers workshop, I never would have tried it.
>
> (Brooke)

Alice had the expectation of success when she initiated peer editing and response journals during her practicum because she had seen such methods working well at McKernan. In attempting the initial stages of such new methods, she learned more about the intricacies and difficulties of establishing them. However, she saw these as transitional problems to be surmounted through developmental instruction, rather than as evidence that the methods "can't work in the real world," as often happens when teachers encounter initial difficulties in instituting innovations to their programs.

Ironically, as student teachers are sent to learn *from* the cooperating teachers, they are sometimes cited as factors in professional development (Pansegrau, 1984). This group of student teachers seems to have been in an interesting position to be instrumental in the professional development of their cooperating teachers. The junior high school teachers were working through the first year of a newly mandated language arts curriculum for Alberta (*Junior High School Language Arts Curriculum Guide*, 1987). Although curriculum and in-service professional workshops had been available to help teachers prepare to adopt it, I have no information about the extent to which teachers were familiar with or amenable to this new curriculum. Thus, possibly the student teachers were equally or more knowledgeable than their cooperating teachers about the philosophy of the new curriculum. The student teachers also helped to make the cooperating teachers aware of a professional network of contacts for additional assistance or support, as two noted that they had put their cooperating teachers in touch with McKernan teachers and one noted the support of her faculty consultant in assisting the cooperating teacher to organize group work.

When Lauren's cooperating teacher rejected her ideas of student-centred learning, she challenged him and negotiated to proceed with her own approaches. She noted that the teacher did not begrudge her challenge and was fair in his evaluation of her. She felt that he had seen some merit in what she was doing but that his subsequent teaching would not be affected.

The students felt that the McKernan experience also influenced their practicum experiences by helping them to see students as individuals and to know an appropriate level for the students. This understanding enabled them to avoid some of the "disasters" common to student teachers, and they all claimed to have had a "lower proportion of disasters," in Joan's words, than in their preceding phase of student teaching, ". . . because I knew they're not going to like this at this age, and I was so much more in contact with kids at that level." Those students who had high school practicum placements were equally assured as those with junior high placements that their heightened understanding of junior high students had assisted their subsequent student teaching; they saw high school students as part of a continuum of development.

One student also provided support for the staff at his practicum school, a rural school with primarily a native population, by his realization that the students at that school could write as well as the students at McKernan, a relatively affluent city school:

> There was always this question in my mind about how would this compare to kids in a city school or kids in a really language-based school. It was really good for me because I had seen the writing at McKernan, and I could see that at [his practicum school] as far as first-draft quality, it was the same. So that was really reassuring. . . . I think that's always sort of a continual fear [that the native school was inferior] there or a thought that that's one of the things that weighs down on the teachers there. Because there are so many things about the situation--the environment--there that are negative that you lose sight sometimes of . . . the quality of the work that is coming out. (Roy)

The McKernan experience, in allowing the education students a non-pressured environment in which to learn about the children they taught, helped them to see the individuals in their classes when they made the transition to full-class teaching. Lauren recalled that her evaluations in student teaching were positive because the faculty consultant praised her ability "to recognize individual differences and needs without isolating the rest of the class," a talent Lauren admired in the McKernan teachers. Alice, whose "shadow" day helped her understand the concerns of her students, developed a tolerance for classroom realities, where students are often distracted from their studies. Her classroom practice reflected that tolerance, as she reported her efforts to help students make transitions from the life of hallways and other classes to her class.

Perspective of Language Arts Education

The goals of a teacher education program must be at least three-fold: to foster an exploration and understanding of oneself as teacher; to foster an understanding of children's realities and development; and to foster an understanding of the demands, complexities, and relevance of the particular school subject and how to relate it meaningfully to students of various developmental and maturity levels. As has been discussed above, the first two goals, which are rather independent of academic discipline, have been addressed by this school-based curriculum course. Though, unfortunately, these goals seem not to have been addressed with much personal relevance in these students' previous work within the Faculty and in prior student teaching practica, the important point is that they have been raised at some time.

The third goal is specifically the province of the language arts education staff and the cooperating teachers in the schools. In this regard the school-based curriculum course seems most essential as a bridge between the university and the schools. If teacher educators in general decry the gap between theory and practice, language arts educators in particular have cause for concern.

In language arts, theorists and researchers of the past several decades have offered radical reconceptions of the roles of the teacher and student and their relationships to language, written expression and literature (Britton, 1970; Moffett and Wagner, 1983; Tchudi and Mitchell, 1989). James Moffett has commented that in the past twenty years "our knowledge has moved forward while practice has moved backward" (quoted in Jensen, 1987). The overall thrust of our understanding of the development of language arts abilities and understandings has been to look to a natural, integrated, developmental model to replace the pieces-to-whole skills model of the past. Moffett and Wagner (1983) discuss this developmental model in terms of the developing embryo, in which all "parts" are present from the embryo but gradually grow more complex; they contrast this view with the "assembly-line" approach of modern education, in which "parts" or skills are added to the child who is fed along the conveyor belt. Theorists and researchers have called for educators to pay attention to the manner in which we as children learn language: we learn holistically, purposefully, and meaningfully (Britton, 1970; Harste, 1984). They call for our language arts classrooms to reflect the realities of human learning and be rooted in genuine language use rather than meaningless drills and decontextualized "dummy runs." Jerome Harste suggests that the best language-learning curriculum is not nearly as "tidy" as is the one we usually plan for children in schools.

Such reconceptualizations of the language arts classroom call for radical alterations of our thinking about language arts pedagogy. Arthur Applebee (1987) acknowledges that we lack a theory of language pedagogy, noting that we have good theories of language learning and some recent theories of classrooms as social environments. He calls for language arts educators to bring these together. Cautioning that we have been overly simplistic in our understanding of the relationship between research and practice, he advises that no one should expect teachers to adopt the latest research findings wholesale. Instead, we should think of research as giving teachers ways to think about their practice so that they can slot new ideas into their repertoires for appropriate uses.

Goodlad documents the gap between current understanding in all academic disciplines and activities in classrooms:

> . . . the major shortcomings of the schools' subject offerings is the common failure of the learning activities to connect the student with the structure and ways of thinking characterizing the field. . . .
> (1984, p.291)

More specifically, he notes the confusion of ends and means, the teaching of specifics as ends unto themselves rather than as means leading to concepts, a criticism which especially applies to some language arts classrooms.

Yet the traditional model of teacher education, in which theory is taught at the university and practice is supervised by a cooperating teacher in the school, is inadequate to promote theoretical advances and insights from research into classroom usage. Unless the cooperating teacher has kept abreast of current thinking in the discipline, the student teacher may receive the message that classroom reality has little to do with the theories of teacher educators (Horowitz, 1974; MacKinnon, 1989). Thus, the student teacher who may be eager to develop expertise in newer methods and philosophies taught in curriculum courses is unlikely to see or try them during practicum; moreover, he or she may be absolutely discouraged from trying these methods in future by the weight of opinion at the school level. The message of the theory/practice gap, of the "two solitudes" of university and school, is implicitly or explicitly reinforced.

Although some students and professors call for a simple extension of duration of the practica, such extensions do nothing to resolve the fundamental problem of the gap between the two worlds. Schön warns against the dilemma of a choice between academic rigor and professional relevance when the orientation of professional schools favours either extreme (1987, p.305).

This continual theory-practice or academic-"real world" gap is especially well-documented in language arts in such areas as writing and grammar instruction and the role of language in learning. For more than sixty years, theorists have argued in favour of integrated instruction in writing and grammar, but this approach generally has not been reflected in classroom practice (Braddock et.al., 1963; Holbrook, 1983). My own study of beginning teachers' intentions for teaching grammar and writing found that, although they expressed support for an integrated approach to grammar and writing instruction, beginning teachers were unprepared by their own schooling and practicum experiences to establish a practice consistent with their stated preferences and with current thinking (McClay, 1988). With a new junior high language arts curriculum in Alberta in 1987, many experienced teachers found their practice of discrete units of grammar instruction to be at odds with the approved curriculum.

This common cycle of separation of university and classroom, theory and practice, is especially discouraging when one looks in other schools where practice accords well with current theory. In such schools and classrooms where staffs have created language arts programs in accord with current thinking in the discipline, current theory is indeed "workable" and provides opportunities for growth in language arts that satisfy the learners' needs and interests as well as the schools' structures (Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1983). Atwell reports that the Booth Bay, Maine students who had five years of writing instruction in a writers workshop approach scored second highest on the state's standardized tests, losing first place to another district in which writing instruction also followed a workshop approach.

The particular context of language arts education in Alberta is that the philosophy statement and program of studies encompassing elementary and secondary levels embraces a developmental view of language arts teaching and learning (Junior High School Language Arts Curriculum Guide, 1987). Skills are to be taught within the context of processes, with an emphasis upon the integration of five "strands" of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. The program focuses upon language-in-use, with direction for teachers to build upon students' out-of-school language and experiences. The junior high school level, which is especially relevant to this study, calls for grades seven through nine language arts classes to be grouped heterogeneously rather than by academic ability.

From the perspective of language arts education, the selection of McKernan School as the host school for the curriculum-and-instruction courses is felicitous, as the principal and staff at the school, in accordance with their district, have adopted a "language-for-learning" philosophy consistent with the ideas and practices advocated by leading language arts education specialists. Such a philosophy recognizes the essential nature of language in all learning and promotes the use of informal talk and exploratory language as an aid to self-understanding and learning content in academic disciplines.

At McKernan School the education students observed and participated in many activities and structures that were consistent with what they were reading and learning in their theoretical explorations of the teaching of English language arts. This is not to imply that McKernan is a utopian, struggle-free environment; in fact, as was clear from the interviews, the education students were encouraged to see the teachers reflect upon new ideas and struggle to solve problems with new methods. The McKernan teachers thus taught the education students a valuable lesson in teacher education: that good teachers are continual learners and risk takers whose classroom practices constantly evolve through experimentation and reflection. Courtland (1990) spells out the difficulty of such a process in her comparison of the beliefs and implications involved in changing from a skills-based to a whole-language approach to instruction. Roskelly (1988) stresses a need for such examples of "active learning and active teaching." She notes that students educated to be passive in classrooms cannot be transformed into active, problem-solving teachers unless their teacher education programs provide models of and experiences in active learning. The example of McKernan teachers encouraged the students to initiate new practices if and when they were given the opportunities in their subsequent practicum experiences.

The McKernan School teachers attempt to achieve the integration of academic subjects that is essential to a language-for-learning philosophy, an example which was not otherwise offered by the practicum experiences of these education students. Lauren in particular seemed quite proud of her exposure to integration of language arts throughout the curriculum and helped teachers at her cooperating school make contact with others at McKernan who could help them bring into their classrooms an awareness of the role of language in learning.

In the area of writing instruction, language arts theorists in recent decades have rejected the literary critic as the model for language arts students to emulate and have looked instead to the practicing writer (Graves, 1983; Murray, 1980). They have therefore rejected the writing product in isolation as the sole focus of attention and have explored the writing process itself, recognizing processes of writing which vary according to the individual writer, the intent, the medium, the audience, and other factors.

This shift in focus is reflected in a writers workshop model of writing instruction, which demands a reconceptualization of the roles of teacher and student vis-a-vis the student's writing. With a "literary critic" model, the teacher is the literary critic, whose pronouncement upon the value of the writing is absolute. The teacher is, therefore, the sole reader of and audience for the writing, leading often to the absurdity of the student telling the teacher what the teacher already knows better than the student. Such "dummy runs" are not real expressions of communication and therefore produce artificial and stilted "school" writing (Britton *et. al.,* 1975). When the teacher ceases to be the literary critic and sole audience of the writing, however, possibilities for true communication, expression, and language-for-learning are created. The teacher is free to redefine herself as a fellow-reader and writer and can respond to the ideas and expression of the writing in many ways, as well as to encourage students to write for purposes other than grades. Roy was very much alive to these possibilities when he enthusiastically noted his rediscovery of the pleasure of writing poetry:

> . . . none of it's good, of course [General laughter], but it really inspired me and showed me . . . that the teacher needs to be what the teacher is teaching. Teacher as writer is a wonderful concept.

Such a reconceptualization is extremely difficult to accomplish and implement in a classroom, however, as Gordon points out:

> Usually a curriculum change is supported by texts, kits, A-V materials, or other purchasable, external, tangible resources. The process approach . . . relies on people resources, specifically, teachers' increased understanding of writing as a process. It relies on their ability to ask questions, to pace their comments, to think fast, to relate with ease and conviction to parents, to individualize instruction, to take risks and learn from mistakes, in short, to depend mainly on themselves.
>
> (1984, pp.100-01)

The very difficulty of this process may perhaps suggest that, just as the change is accomplished ultimately by the individual rather than a text resource, so too should education students be exposed to people in the process of making this transition. By this exposure, they will see firsthand the concerns and frustrations that arise when such a major change is occurring, and they will later be able to call upon this experience as they approach innovations in their classrooms.

These education students, whose backgrounds did not include experience with process approaches to writing instruction, were delighted with the program they saw at McKernan. It influenced them as writers and as teachers.

> And it's nice to write in front of your class, not to give time for creative writing while you mark papers. You're not showing them anything. I sat down with my kids and I wrote and they said, "What are you doing?" "Well, I'm writing a story too." And then they wanted to hear it. And it was really interesting to have that sharing time.
>
> (Nicole)

They also saw a contrast between a program with opportunities for real expression and communication as compared to one which adhered to the traditional idea of teacher as sole audience and examiner. When the audience for a piece of writing is expanded, the emphasis is on the expressive and communicative qualities of the writing, not merely on the mark the piece receives at the hands of the teacher. One student found this contrast especially difficult to adjust to in her student teaching experience, where she found that students who wrote only for teachers seemed to care only for marks; she spoke of the intrinsic motivation of the writers workshops at McKernan.

In this redefinition of the teacher's role in relation to the students' writing, the education students saw the potential effects upon the teacher's entire relationship with his or her students. Nicole spoke of the rapport between teachers in writing workshops and their students:

> There's a real relationship going on between them and the students, because they're reading very personal material that the students are writing, and helping them with it, etc., whereas, in traditionally structured language arts classes, there may or may not be that interaction. A teacher may have one or two students that they do have that close personal relationship with, but usually it's very distant, whereas at McKernan you could see that the teachers were really a part of the students' lives.

The students valued the time they had at McKernan to have professional discussions with each other in small groups and with their professor. Their learning was contextualized rather than theoretical and was immediately responsive to their needs. A focus on informal professional discussions was in accord with the intentions of Marg Iveson, who indicated that one of her goals in moving the course to a school was to encourage professional rather than academic discussions during informal exchanges with students. The feeling of collegiality resulting from such exchanges is a valuable component of the beginning teachers' developing sense of professional identity. This collegiality offers a consistency between theory and practice at the university level that matches the integrated, language-for-learning, and student-centred approaches that the students learned about in language arts education. Beginning teachers often feel unable to seek help or ask questions in schools and unnecessarily restrict their questions to those in narrowly-defined proximity (Newberry, 1979), but these education students already learned to seek help from their student peers and from staff members whom they were encouraged to regard as colleagues. The accessibility of outlets for professional discussion and questioning that these students experienced with their professor and with the staff at McKernan can eliminate some of the isolation of the neophyte as well as illustrate a consistency in the philosophy of their program.

The staff at McKernan, in their willingness to engage in frank discussions with the education students, seemed to "coach," in Donald Schön's term. Schön promotes coaching as a low-risk manner of encouraging reflection for professional growth, calling it "the right kind of telling" (1987, p.17). When the discussion is not threatening or stressful, the student has no need to be defensive or anxious about the "right" answers. The discussion can thus be an honest exploration of a topic and can provide opportunities for real learning. The coaching role also offers benefits to the experienced teacher, whose tacit knowledge may become explicit when he or she responds to the questions and observations of the students (p.22).

Expanding the Research Focus

As teacher educators recognize the limitations of traditional structures of teacher education programs and develop alternatives to prepare "active learners and active teachers" for the challenges of teaching, we are increasingly aware that universities and schools must work collaboratively, not merely cooperatively, in this venture. Such school-based courses as Marg Iveson's language arts education courses in the McKernan project potentially offer positive, productive ways to accomplish many goals of teacher education. The project draws upon the expertise of all the people involved--the university professor offers her knowledge of current theory in language arts along with her experience as a classroom teacher and her awareness of her education students' needs and progress; the classroom teachers offer their varied experiences and approaches with adolescents and the current world of today's secondary schools; the education students, while gaining guided, non-pressured experience with junior-high students and the world of the junior high school, also make a valuable contribution to their profession. They offer their freshness of view and outlook, their eagerness to question and to learn, and their enthusiasm, which can revitalize experienced teachers and secondary students alike.

Henry's view of the network of "partners in teaching" he and his peers had established is a valuable and refreshing outlook upon his experience of a curriculum course at McKernan School. But it only tells part of the story, for the network of partners in teaching in this course certainly extends to the university professor and to the staff and students of McKernan School.

Having concluded these interviews and considered the themes in the context of teacher education and language arts education, I began to shape a more intensive research study. While intrigued by the education students' enthusiasm for their McKernan experience and excited by the potential of such a program, I realized the limitations of after-the-fact interviews and wanted to expand the focus of my inquiry. The resulting research design will be discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT FOR RESEARCH

My questions for the initial interviews were broad: What did you do at McKernan? What were the strengths of the experience? What suggestions do you have for its improvement? As the conversation progressed additional questions arose, ultimately becoming key questions in my research. Dobbert (1984) stresses the need to revise questions as data gathering proceeds; these initial interviews helped to clarify and expand the questions I later developed.

The themes I drew from these interviews were clearly relevant to the education students' perceptions of their growth as teachers. I wanted to explore these further, as well as to pursue additional areas of importance. I wanted to explore in more depth the actual events and relationships with students, teachers, and peers which contributed to the education students' understandings of their teaching and learning of language arts. What connections would they make between and among these experiences and their readings and discussions about language arts education?

The initial interviews, having been conducted in April, 1989, after the education students had completed their practica, were necessarily influenced by their practicum experiences. I wanted to learn how their perceptions developed during the university part of their courses, at McKernan School, and in retrospect after they completed their practica. For example, the interviewees were enthusiastic about the absence of performance pressure at

McKernan; was this perception coloured by the greater pressure of student teaching?

The effects of the McKernan experience, as these students called it, seemed to carry over to their student teaching; I was struck by the confidence of several students in refusing to conform to accepted practices at their practicum placements. Even those who had conformed under perceived pressure saw the conformity merely as a temporary concession to the politics of good evaluations in student teaching. So, my focus expanded to include following some students to their student teaching.

I also became curious about the roles of the language arts teachers at McKernan. They had apparently been extremely open and inviting, willing even to discuss their uncertainties and new methods at a time of apparent transition for some of them. I wondered what roles these teachers see themselves fulfilling in this project. What do they learn by participating in it? Do they see it as professional development in any way?

I was also interested in the primary catalysts of the program. How do McKernan principal Don Vinge and professor Marg Iveson see their roles? What are their intentions in structuring this project? What are their understandings of the nature of the collaboration they are forging? The language arts teachers would not likely have initiated such a project themselves, or perhaps, even participated without support from their administration.

My initial intention was to include a focus upon the school students to learn their perspectives on the "extra adults" in their classes; however, I ultimately omitted them from my research. I felt that direct-data gathering techniques, such as interviewing, would be overly intrusive and would result in perceived performance pressure for the education students, as well as interfere with the dynamics of their work with the students.

With the focus expanded to the education students, the teachers, the principal, and the English education professor, my intention was to explore the McKernan project in depth from the perspectives of these participants. The design of the study is detailed in the following section.

Design of the Study

Purpose

My purpose is to describe the culture created by the participants of this program. In describing this culture, I focus upon the various participants' perceptions of their roles, their learning, and the connections they made relevant to their understanding of teaching and learning language arts.

My use of the term "culture" may be problematic. Geertz cautions that the many definitions of the term can lead to a "conceptual morass" (1973, p. 4),) citing one anthropology text which employs eleven different definitions of it in one chapter. Dobbert defines "culture" as

> an historically developed, patterned way of life which includes beliefs and ideologies; formally and informally established interrelationships between persons and groups; and material goods and technologies, all of which are systematically related so as to form an integral whole.
>
> (1984, p. 10)

However, in my research I acknowledge a distinction from Dobbert, as the culture which I set out to describe was not "historically developed" but in creation as I studied it. It had no existence for the education students prior to their involvement in their curriculum-and-instruction courses; various other participants (the university instructor, school principal, and some of the language arts teachers) had been involved with the program in previous years, but in some cases the nature and scope of their involvement had changed significantly over the years.

Geertz favours a definition of the term which is essentially semiotic:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.
> (1973, p. 5)

This definition, though seemingly less precise than Dobbert's, in fact is more appropriate for my work of searching for meanings developed by the participants while they "spin their webs" together and individually.

As a researcher in a participant-observer role during the evolution of a culture, my role is somewhat different from a participant-observer in a pre-existing culture. The implications of this will be discussed in the methodology section below.

Methodology

Educational researchers have recognized the importance of context, calling for context-specific research in order to address the complexities of the human enterprise of schooling (Goodlad, 1984; Grindstaff, 1987; Mishler, 1979). In addition to allowing a focus upon the complexities of schooling, context-specific research provides opportunities to focus upon the meanings constructed by various participants in the enterprise.

Teachers tend to rely heavily upon their experience in making pedagogical and managerial decisions and framing classroom behaviour. Whether that experiential knowledge is called "connected knowing" (Belenky *et. al.,* 1986), "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985), "narrative knowing" (Bruner, 1985), "the primacy of experience" (Eisner, 1988), or "experiential learning" (Baker, 1989), it seems clearly important that researchers attempt to understand its basis in the perceptions of neophyte teachers. To accomplish this goal, a naturalistic methodology is essential; the researcher ought to be with the people as their experiences are being shaped, explored, and made meaningful. Given this focus upon the culture created and the meanings developed by the participants in the McKernan project, my research is well-suited to an ethnographic framework, in which it is appropriate to describe the patterns of a culture and to take the perspectives and positions of informants into account (Dobbert, 1984; Spradley, 1979). (Geertz prefers to use the word "evoke" rather than "describe" to remind the ethnographer that culture is not a physical object to be "described" under a microscope.)

The use of the field-based researcher as a primary instrument of research gives depth to the data but has the serious consequence that the researcher must be trained and be aware of his or her style of personal reaction and learning in order to distinguish a private response from a cultural meaning (Dobbert, 1984). To increase the validity of a single researcher's interpretations, Dobbert advises intersubjectivity through the use of multiple sources of data and methods of data collection and analysis. These will be discussed more specifically in the following section on procedures. Mathison (1988) indicates that by such triangulation of information sources, the researcher will be faced with, at various times, convergence, inconsistencies and/or contradictions. This seems especially true in research such as mine, in which the meanings created by various people are relevant. As no two people assign precisely the same significance to events and experiences, the researcher's task is to search for explanations and interpretations which render the information comprehensible.

Geertz (1988) is in accord with this view in his discussion of the futility of expecting complete harmony and coherence in one's interpretations. He likens ethnographic research to literary appraisal in that we look for a ring of truth rather than complete consistency. The positive or negative appraisal stems in both cases from the supportive detail ("thick description") and the force of the author's style, though the matter of authorial style on the impact of the text is one which ethnographers have traditionally shied away from.

The researcher functions as a participant-observer while involved in "doing" the research, but in reporting the research, he or she necessarily becomes "the author." Geertz explores the parallel between the question of "signature" or "author-ity" for authors of literary and of ethnographic works and suggests that only by confronting this role explicitly can ethnographers truly understand the means by which research reports become convincing:

> The ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously has less to do with either a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has with their capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly "been there." And that, persuading us that this offstage miracle has occurred, is where the writing comes in.
> (1988, pp. 4-5)

As a person trained in techniques of literary analysis, I feel compelled by Geertz's argument and see it as part of the essence of "person-specific" (rather than personal) research in which I engaged.

The role of the participant-observer is necessarily complex and in constant tension. I was aware of this tension in myself as the research proceeded and focused upon it often in journal entries. In the sense that the culture I studied was in creation during the research, my role as participant took on a particular significance that needed to be explored and made explicit. The same consciousness and explicitness is required for my "authorship" of a document interpreting that culture.

Procedures

In researching a project with a broad sweep and short duration, the means of gathering information are critically important. I have relied primarily upon observations, journals, interviews, and documents and attempted whenever possible not to add to the workload of the participants in the program. The exception to this caveat is Marg Iveson, whose time and attention were vitally important to my ability to participate meaningfully in the project as a researcher. Her receptiveness to having a researcher in her classroom stemmed from her belief that she also would gain in understanding.

In trying to observe everything of relevance in the program, I was obviously hindered by an inability to be in several places at once. Often, I intended to observe one activity but found myself staying with another one which had become interesting and seemed important. I then attempted to catch up with the other activity by other means. I kept extensive field notes for daily observations and frequently solicited the observations of other participants in the various activities.

Journals of various participants are a source of information. My own journal became a forum for reflecting upon my field notes, my initial thoughts about various observations and conversations, and the beginnings of connections between my observations and readings. In addition to keeping a detailed journal herself, Marg Iveson required her students to keep journals, though she did not require that they be handed in. Many students generously made their journals available when they came to trust me and knew that my interest was benign.

I relied extensively upon audiotapes of interviews, conversations, and work sessions, both formal and informal, in individual and group sessions, to record information and perceptions from as many project participants as possible, as often as possible. Dobbert, in weighing the merits of audiotaping, points to the time and expense of transcribing tapes but also acknowledges that taking notes verbatim is especially difficult for inexperienced researchers (1984, p.249). As a relatively inexperienced researcher and interviewer, I wanted to be able to concentrate on the content of my interviews and conversations rather than on note-taking, so I used audiotapes to free me for my primary task. In addition, the tapes provide greater reliability than notes.

I interviewed the participating language arts teachers, principal, and assistant-principal separately at the beginning of the project, to ask about their previous roles and involvement, as well as their expectations for the upcoming project. As the project progressed through the two weeks, I interviewed them all again separately at least once to ask about their perceptions as the project proceeded and again several months after the project's completion for that term. During the time at McKernan I audiotaped the education students frequently, individually and in various groups, but refrained from audiotaping them while they were teaching. This would have been too intrusive and would have put performance pressure on them. I sat in on their small-group teaching sessions, trying not to take many notes at the time, and catching up on the field notes immediately afterward, in order to remove any sense for them or their students that my presence was official or evaluative. When the education students returned to the university in December to complete their curriculum-and-instruction courses, I interviewed and audiotaped them, some in groups and some individually, to ask about the connections they were or were not seeing among the various components of their professional terms: the courses and readings, the work at McKernan, and their student teaching.

Observations were also essential in gathering information about the culture and roles of the participants in the project. Before the McKernan project began, I sat in on the curriculum-and-instruction courses several times each week, partly to become an accepted member of the group, partly to come to know the students, and partly to understand what they were learning and thinking before they went to McKernan. While at McKernan, I sat in on classes as the education students were introduced to the McKernan students and as they taught or led their groups. As mentioned above, I tried to remain as unobtrusive as possible during these observations. I was introduced to the McKernan students (or introduced myself) as another teacher and graduate student from the university who was interested in the project at McKernan. I generally moved from group to group during a class period. During these observations, I participated as little as possible, just looking interested and enjoying the proceedings. When I sat in on planning sessions of the education students as they tried to develop plans for teaching (for example, a thematic unit on appearance and reality), I participated to some degree, which I will discuss more fully later. Additional observations for the research were conducted during the practicum. I observed three student teachers and spoke with them about the observations and about their overall situations in student teaching.

I became a pack rat for documents, filing away anything official that came from the university courses or McKernan School. These included course handouts, schedules, booklets introducing McKernan's philosophy and timetabling, The Write Stuff (the school literary anthology), and daily notices. On the first day of the university courses, I obtained from the education students a statement of their "Pre-Course Thoughts on Teaching Language Arts," which I devised and which Marg Iveson allowed me class time to secure, to learn their expectations as they entered the term. Other documents I used, thanks to the permission of Marg and the individual students involved, included education students' journals, writing portfolios and early drafts of some of the portfolio pieces, and final reflective papers written for course requirements.

In addition to these means of gathering information, I also had another means by which to learn about the roles and understandings of the education students. This was my involvement in writing conferences. As the education students worked on their writing portfolios, Marg invited them to have writing conferences with herself, with each other, or with me. These conferences, during which I obviously needed to participate rather than observe, helped me understand what the students were learning about the processes of writing and about teaching writing.

An ethnography stands or falls on the amount and substance of detail offered in support of generalizations and interpretations. Consistency, or internal coherence, as in a novel, is not a hallmark of truth, as contradictions exist in cultures and in people. The richness of detail noted and reported by the researcher allows others to "appraise" the value of the research. Geertz asserts:

> [I]t is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers." (1973, p. 16)

I hope that in detailing the experiences and understandings of the participants of the McKernan project I will bring the reader "into touch with the lives of strangers." Their experiences and perceptions, though unique and individual, tell stories that resonate with the concerns of teachers in general and language arts teachers in particular.

Boundaries

The boundaries of this research project are set in part by the individuals involved and the timing of the study; a study of the McKernan project in another year would develop into a completely different document than this one. In earlier years, the degree of trust among the school staff and university professor might have been less than the high degree that I witnessed in the third year of their partnership. In the fourth or fifth years, I would have reported more work with reading among the school students and education students, as well as the creation of writing anthologies by the junior high writers and their university partners. As with all research in context, the ever-changing contexts offer different insights, different problems, and different triumphs. However, the purpose of this research is to study the culture created by these people, in particular as it affects their understandings of teaching and learning English language arts. Geertz cautions against confusing the locus of a study with the object (1973). Although no attempt need be made to judge this culture itself, the research can be discussed in terms of what our current understanding of teaching and learning language arts can and perhaps should involve as well as what these participants understand about it.

My intention is that this study be a study of learning in language arts teacher education rather than of structures in teacher education, as teacher education already has many structures studies. Structures facilitate certain possibilities in learning and discourage others, but they do not determine learning.

If the ethnographer is the instrument of research, then a significant boundary to the research lies in the strengths and weaknesses of the particular researcher. Any researcher's ability to gather and interpret information is obviously limited. Some of the process of data gathering depends upon fortuitously being in the right place at the right time. Do we always choose the "right" people to speak with at a given time? Do we always pay proper attention to what they say and understand it as they intend? The best balances to minimize these limitations are to rely whenever possible upon multiple sources to cross-check perceptions. The use of tape recordings and transcriptions helps to re-check, re-confirm, and re-interpret much of the information available, as does continuing discussion with the participants.

Dobbert advises the ethnographer to review his or her own biases periodically throughout the research and to explore their possible side effects on the study. Having explained my biases at the outset of this research, I continued to do so in analysis of the data from the McKernan project.

Ethical Considerations

This research project was approved by the Department of Secondary Education's Ethics Review Committee and by the Faculty of Education-Edmonton Public School Board's Cooperative Activities Program. Permission of participants has been granted for the use of their audiotaped comments as well as for any written documents supplied. All participants were generous in offering permission, confidence, time, attention, and interest in my work.

I will provide a copy of this dissertation for the staff, parents, and students of McKernan School. I have offered to make an oral presentation on the procedures and findings of my research to the teachers, parents, and students of the school at the completion of the work.

Like Donald Schön's image of the "swampy lowland" of professional practice, research in context, I have learned, is messy but also contains problems of great interest. The process of doing and writing this research has taught me, in ways I had previously not appreciated, the complexity of research as an ethical enterprise. Some issues seem to me unresolvable, with foregrounding of the issues the best of inadequate alternatives. While prior to beginning my research the ethics of doing the research were foremost in my mind, the ethics of writing the research later became significant.

Patti Lather, in discussing the influence of postmodernism on research, cites three shifts in emphasis: a shift from "general theorizing to problems of interpretation and description," a deconstructive "focus on the textual staging of knowledge," and a "focus on the social relations of the research" (1991, pp.90-91). These shifts in emphasis, in varying degrees, categorize this research and point to the inherent ethical issues.

Who's telling whose story?

The emphases upon interpretation, "the ethnographic moment" of "a hunkering down on detail" (Marcus and Fisher in Lather, 1991, p.90), and the textual staging of knowledge present problems of evocation and honesty as one considers how best to tell the story, as well as precisely whose story is being told.

In focusing upon interpretation, in acknowledging that the vision I present is not the truth but as many versions of truths as I can gather together, I foreground my own voice, which then risks intruding excessively and detracting from the attempt to present multiple perspectives. Ironically, in seeking the plural, I risk over-emphasizing the first person singular. I also risk undermining the strength of the ethnographic detail, for if an ethnographer convinces by the force of "author-ity," as Geertz claims, then an emphasis upon the elusive nature of other people's perspectives can do one's author-ity no good.

Deborah Britzman speaks of this dilemma in her own research, a multi-perspective study of student teaching:

> . . . there remains a contradictory point of no return: of abandoning the moralistic desire to portray the study's subjects as they would portray themselves and position myself behind their backs to point out what they could not see, would not do, and could not have said.
>
> (1990, p.5)

For my own work, however, I suspect the contradiction is somewhat more complicated by my situation within the culture of the group, for my participation in the creation of the evolving culture perhaps permits me to speak from "behind their backs." In presenting multiple perspectives, I would have been dishonest to seem to eliminate my own perspective from consideration. Conversely, however, I hoped to present other people's stories with little enough interference that they could recognize themselves in the work.

My resolution to this dilemma has been, perhaps, a half-way measure, but it attempts to sort out and present my own understanding with respect to perspective and chronology. The "Narratives" section, in detailing multiple narratives, limits my comments to those which were legitimately noted "from behind their backs," or more accurately, from beside them or face-to-face with them. Later analysis and observations are reserved for the "Perspectives" section. This results in some repetition in the unfolding stories. It also, however, simplifies the problem of chronology, or rather, lack of tidy chronology in my understanding. Just as Britzman found that the understandings of her student teachers did not proceed neatly according to the linear chronology of student teaching, so I found myself returning to events and people as they adjusted and revised their understandings. The division between the "Narratives" and "Perspectives" sections respects and clarifies that recursiveness.

These questions of presentation of perspectives and interpretation are part of the larger question of "story" in ethnographic or other story-telling. The notion of ethnography as "truth" has been re-examined, as ethnographers grapple with Geertz's contention that attention must be paid to the writing, for certainly they are at least "partial fictions" (Clifford in Britzman, 1990). Britzman sees ethnography as

> a regulating fiction, as a particular narrative practice that produces textual identities. Such an approach admits a significant problem that ethnography often masks: the real problem of partiality--of investment in how the story is told and of the impossibility of telling everything. For me, the reason we do ethnography is to understand problems in more complex ways. . . .
>
> (1990, p.11)

If we are primarily interested in understanding problems in more complex ways, then our best, most ethical strategies are those which unmask our assumptions and offer as explicitly as possible our own "guilty readings," in Britzman's phrase.

Lather suggests, in focusing upon the dilemma of story-telling in research, that perhaps fictive forms may help us tell some stories as stories (1991). In my work, I certainly found that suggestion to be true in terms of the understandings of the education students, whose poetry evoked their work and thought so vividly.

Reciprocity and anonymity

The issues of reciprocity and anonymity have become important ethical matters for me in understanding my research. Lather writes of the reciprocity of the researcher and the researched, noting the ethical demand to consider reciprocity more seriously than as a useful data-gathering tool (1991).

My initial conception of reciprocity was as return of knowledge, that I would share whatever "final" understandings I arrived at with those involved who had shaped my understanding; I would provide opportunities for them to respond to, amend, clarify, or argue with my analysis. While in class at university and at McKernan with students and staff, my understanding of the word became more grounded in daily action and talk, and I thought of reciprocity as sharing my experience and thoughts with those who shared with me. I shared my teaching experience: when someone needed ideas for teaching a particular novel in student teaching, I could suggest some. My research questioning, with single or group interviews, became part of the language-for-learning environment. In such ways, I supported and extended their understandings as I was studying them.

Thus reciprocity became a complication for the "purity" of the research--it would be a messy business at best to sort out how much staff-room conversation would have occurred among education students without my invitation to talk about their experiences. Such intervention made the research less "pure," to be sure. While my initial conception of reciprocity was as an ethical matter, I believed myself to be well within ethical boundaries. Initially concerned about the potential for exploiting people who so generously opened themselves to me, I became confident that I was giving something of value back to them.

Gradually I also began to see reciprocity as an aspect of the question of anonymity, an aspect which requires me to "give back," in a more fundamental sense, the stories of the teachers at least. Conceived as a protection for the innocent and vulnerable, the case for anonymity has been reconsidered in individual cases in the light of cooperative and collaborative activities (Shulman, 1990). The question arises of the ethics of "protecting" people who do not require or desire protection.

When I first approached the teachers and administrators for cooperation and permission to interview them and use their comments in my work, I made the standard offer of anonymity. McKernan principal Don Vinge did not want it for himself or the school; he was proud of his school and staff and saw no need to disguise them. I assumed that I was required to do so, and he understood my position. Then I approached the teachers, who, without exception, saw anonymity as a peculiarity of the university system, of which I was, perhaps, a prisoner. They laughed at me and said in effect, "What a silly idea, but if you must use pseudonyms, go ahead." That was before the project began, before they could know how or what I would write.

Later, I came to see the issue, helped by my advisors, in terms of layers of anonymity. There is ample cause for providing anonymity for the education students, and unquestionably for the school students; there is less justification in my mind for protecting teachers and administrators who do not need protection, whose work is a source of pride to them and their community.

Making the McKernan staff invisible when they do not wish to be would be an appropriation of their identities that I believe to be unethical. Certainly, they are free to speak and write of their work, but that begs the question of whether I am free to do so without proper acknowledgement of them.

On the other hand, however, perhaps a decision to abandon anonymity can only be made after the fact, when the participants have the opportunity to read the written draft. In this situation, the decision of any one of the participants to maintain his or her anonymity would preclude disclosure of any other names at the same level or at a level that would reveal names at a different layer.

The risk of influencing the particular kinds of research that can or will be done if anonymity is an issue to decide on an individual basis is significant. For this reason, I believe that a genuine offer of anonymity must be extended in each situation and to each person. The final decision to be made in the research, perhaps, is the decision regarding anonymity, and it can only be made after the participants have read the final document.

In this dissertation, confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms has been accorded to the school students and the education students. The names of the McKernan School and its administrators and teachers have not been shielded through the use of pseudonyms, a decision which was reached only after the individuals had read the work and stated their inclination to have their actual names used.

As schools and universities find new ways to work together on mutual problems and for mutual goals, researchers will need to respond to the changing practices with reconsiderations of such issues as anonymity. In doing research in context, researchers will need to respond sensitively to individual contexts. Perhaps if I had done my research during the first or second years of the McKernan project, there would have been weaker arguments against anonymity or less mutual trust among McKernan staff and Marg Iveson, but then the entire research would also have been different. Researchers must work within the context they choose to research.

Language Considerations

Language and style

My use of extensive quotations, particularly in the "Narratives" section, reflects two intentions. The first is my wish to evoke the spirit and liveliness of the people whose stories I try to tell. Hoping to provide an indication of the perspectives of others, I have let people speak for themselves as much as possible within the framework of the dissertation. Certainly, this dissertation is primarily my interpretation and structures, but by using lengthy quotations I can better show the context of people's remarks and, I hope, be truer to their sense. Second, in focusing upon the uses of language for learning, I find that the expressive language of the participants gives a more accurate sense of their learning-in-speaking than would a summation of their remarks. The exclamations, repetitions, false starts, "thought dialogues" (my term for language couched in such phrases as "so I thought, 'you don't know for sure'"), and general derailments of the train of thought are often suggestive of the understanding and emotions of the individual.

In quotations of oral language, nonstandard expressions are occasionally used for the sake of accuracy. Expressive language is unrehearsed and often raw in form because the speaker's concentration is on the thought rather than the form. Deletions and clean-ups have been made for the sake of clarity and to avoid excessive repetition.

In quotations, several conventions are used:

[ ] Brackets designate inserted words not used by the speaker. Brackets are used to summarize longer phrasing or to clarify the context of a pronoun, for example.

-- Dashes are used to signal a break of thought in a person's speech.

. . . Ellipses indicate deleted words, phrases, or sentences.

I have corrected errors in spelling in written work rather than use the conventional repetition of the error followed by "[sic]." Most of the spelling errors in the written work I have quoted come from journal writing, which is expressive writing not intended for publication. I would feel churlish if I were to highlight spelling errors in such writing, and the stereotype of the English teacher who pounces upon errors is one I prefer to leave behind.

For accuracy, I have opted for informality in my use of first names for all the participants of the project. Education students called Marg and the McKernan teachers by their first names throughout their association, which also reflects the sense of collegiality established. The only exception to this was Don Vinge: the education students, as far as I could hear, called him Mr. Vinge, but the teachers all called him Don. I have chosen to maintain first names throughout because I felt the inconsistency of terminology would be distracting and the formality of titles would be contradictory to the informality of the participants.

In passages with references both to McKernan students and education students, I use "students" or "children" to refer to the McKernan students and "education students" or "university partners" to refer to the education students. Education students are only referred to as student teachers in the context of their actual practicum work.

Embarrassing as this is to admit, I confess to a problem in designating terminology for the work of students and teachers at McKernan School. I initially called it a "program," which is completely inaccurate, as "program" implies a set agenda or sequence to be followed. I next borrowed the terminology of my initial interviewees who called it "the McKernan experience," which I thought conveyed the sense of adventure with which they spoke of their work at McKernan School. However, that too is inaccurate, as the experiences are multiple and varied among education students in each of the classes, among education students in one class, and among McKernan teachers in terms of individuals and years. In Chapter 1, however, I retain the phrase because it is what those particular education students said. When I participated in the work at McKernan School, I did not hear education students say "the McKernan experience," so it makes sense not to use the phrase in connection with them.

I eventually came to call it the McKernan project or partnership, both of which seem fairly accurate. "Project" implies on-going work with a sense of larger purpose within which the participants re-evaluate and adjust their efforts. "Partnership" implies at least two parties, which complicated my terminology. Calling it the McKernan-Iveson partnership is an accurate designation in terms of the primary organizers, but can an institution be a partner with an individual? Moreover, this designation omits the education students whose participation is so central. The institution of the university was not a primary catalyst in the partnership, so "the McKernan-University partnership" seems inaccurate. So I generally call it the McKernan project. Marg Iveson tends to call it the McKernan relationship, which is perhaps the best designation for the participants to use, implying a special relationship among individuals rather than institutions. I have refrained from calling it the McKernan relationship, however, in attempting to focus attention on the work and goals.

Discussion of data

The account of this research is organized in three parts, of which Part I "Contexts" contains discussions of the varied contexts relevant to this research. Part II "Narratives" tells the stories of the education students' work at McKernan School with teachers and children, as well as their experiences and understandings during and after their student teaching practica. The stories are recounted, as far as I am able, from many perspectives, with an emphasis upon experience rather than analysis. The language is often informal and expressive, occasionally poetic, and the focus is upon the immediacy of the context, with extensive quotations from interviews and writings of the participants. Part III "Perspectives" presents discussion of my research questions with regard to the issues and concerns of teacher education in general and language arts education in particular. As I widen the focus from the particular context of the participants of the McKernan project to these underlying themes and concerns, I again bring in the writings of researchers, whose writings are more formal and transactional.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT OF THE McKERNAN PROJECT

From initial conversations between two individuals, the McKernan project developed to include education students, teachers, and school students. Chapter 3 details the history of the project and the intentions and concerns of those participants who give it shape and coherence.

Developing a Language-for-Learning Partnership

Speaking of the genesis of the McKernan project, Don Vinge noted the convergence of several influential factors and circumstances. Beginning his tenure as principal of McKernan School in 1986, he made a commitment to promote language development in the school's two official languages; this commitment was in harmony with his associate superintendent's requirement for a language-for-learning philosophy statement from each school within his division.

A focus on language for learning recognizes the central role of language in shaping our understanding of our experiences. James Britton's articulation of this centrality of language has informed the thinking of educators who seek to encourage language in many forms in our classrooms as a means of supporting and extending learning. Britton concludes that

> we use language as a means of organizing a representation of the world--each for himself--and that the representation so created constitutes the world we operate in, the basis of all the predictions by which we set the course of our lives.
>
> (1970, p.7)

In seeking to develop a language-for-learning priority in McKernan School, the teachers committed themselves to increase the "learning by doing" and "learning by talking" in their classrooms. McKernan School's philosophy statement on language, which is published in the school directory for parents, is as follows:

> We believe that language is fundamental to all learning. Language is closely related to thinking and serves as a vehicle to allow us to understand and interpret reality.
>
> We believe that language is best learned through use in the situations where it applies. Students learn to speak, read, and write by speaking, reading, and writing as they learn in all their subjects. A student requires opportunities to express understandings of ideas in all subjects in his or her own words in order to gain control of the language. These experiences help ensure that he or she has moved from information processing to understanding. Improvement in language is a key to improvement in all subjects.
>
> The acquisition of language is a lifelong process. It is important that students be exposed to excellent models of oral and written language if they are to speak and write well. When a student is surrounded by excellent language and continually uses language to learn in all subjects, he or she will gradually master the language.

In attempting to support the needs of the junior high language arts teachers, Don sought out Marg Iveson at the university to explore ways in which the school could approach its language-for-learning priority. In initial discussions, he reported that the two brainstormed ideas for in-service work to assist the language arts teachers and began to focus upon

> the unique opportunities for McKernan School, situated where it is, a ten-age [kindergarten through grade 9] school with a variety of programs, to cooperate or collaborate with the university. We also talked a little bit about what could be done in addition to the basic practicum experiences.

Don was concerned with "creating a more honest relationship between the university and the schools," which he and the staff felt had been lacking in some past ventures. Situated near the university, the school had been used, the staff felt,

> by the [Education] Faculty for a lot of things that didn't have much pay out for us, or perceived pay out. . . . Oftentimes, we were duplicating feedback on the information that was gathered here. We were a convenience in many ways, aside from the genuinely satisfactory experience that some of the teachers had in student teachers.

In my discussions with several teachers at McKernan, this theme was repeated, as teachers told of university-conducted research studies that the teachers felt had little or no benefit to them in working with their children.

In discussing the beginnings of the project, Marg Iveson concurred with Don Vinge's account of their initial conversations and her work with the school teachers at a professional development day, also noting that "It's more a history of people than of events." The personal association of these two catalysts of the project provided a foundation of trust in each other's vision of education:

> Don Vinge was there, and he had been my associate superintendent when I was a consultant for the school board. I knew he was very open to good language learning, good teaching and learning in general. He was very open to working with people from the university; he had certainly brought people in on exchange from university to the school board, and back and forth.

The conversations with Don and the work with McKernan teachers dovetailed with her university teaching. Marg cited the importance of a field trip with her language arts education students as sparking her thinking about possibilities in teaching curriculum-and-instruction courses:

> During that same year, my students visited a junior high as a one-day field trip. During that time they worked with writing conferences with each of five different students, each of whom supposedly was at the same stage of the writing process on a particular assignment. They learned, and I was reminded, that "the same stage" means that every kid is at a different

> place anyway. However, the conversation of the real world of school and what kids were like and what kids' skill development was like, and the range of kids was very productive to me. . . . I think my students influenced me a lot because of the real world credibility of the practicum and that one-day experience at the junior high school. That was real, and everything that we did surrounded that and supported that. . . . Coming out of that, and Don Vinge's openness to work with his staff, I was keen to go ahead in any way that the school wanted. I knew that my kids would learn given the opportunity to work closely across time with junior high students, so I was quite willing to have them working any way that the school wanted them to.

Marg also noted that several of her colleagues in the Faculty of Education were influential in providing encouragement and the support that comes from seeing others working through similar goals and issues:

> Dr. Andrea Borys, who was at that time teaching the integrated program in Phys. Ed., was doing some work at a school. And Dr. Therese Craig in Drama Ed. was interested in doing some work in the school as well. At the same time, there was a group of people meeting on campus who were working in some kind of collaborative way in schools or their students were working in a collaborative way with school students. That on-going conversation with those people encouraged me to continue working at McKernan.

Once the work at McKernan had begun, her students confirmed Marg's understanding of the value of the work with junior high students and teachers:

> My students told me through evaluation forms and in their on-going feedback that it was valuable to be working in the school, so once we had started, there was no question that this was a positive situation and something to continue.

Through their informal discussions, Don Vinge said that he and Marg Iveson arrived at a "model of cooperation which would be beneficial to both parties, mutually advantageous." Though the precise details of the work that McKernan teachers and students do with the education students vary each year, the basic premises have not changed much: Marg and Don invite language arts teachers to volunteer to have education students work in their classes. Marg's invitation to the teachers is to "think of what you would like to do with your kids that could be facilitated by having five or six interested adults with some expertise in your class." She states her confidence that whatever work is structured will be beneficial for her students, as they will gain experience working with teachers and children. She works with the school teachers to structure the work they initiate for the education students and school students. Marg does the advance work of sifting through the teachers' schedules to organize schedules for each of her students. The education students each work with children in the classes of at least two language arts teachers. The parameters for Marg are that her education students work with individual students or in small groups rather than in a full-class setting. In her teaching and assessment, Marg does not evaluate the teaching performances of her students as they work with the school children.

Planning

Planning the work of the McKernan project each year has required flexibility and sensitivity, as Marg and the McKernan staff have adjusted to meet mutual and individual needs. In terms of planning, according to Don Vinge, "in each year we have felt that we started the planning too late," noting wryly,

> I suppose that, to a degree, we're in the "ready, fire, aim" mode and that we have been adjusting our aim a little bit more each year in the three years that we have been operating.

[By the fifth year of the project, however, planning had become a continual process of teachers considering and developing ideas for the following year's work.] The "ready, fire, aim" approach to planning was important initially, as Don tried to be sensitive to the concerns of his teachers; he asked for volunteers rather than assigning teachers to participate in the project. He felt that the school and university partnership had to have a trial run "to get most of the key staff on side with regard to the concept:"

> If you have an emphasis that has been in place for a number of years and staff that has been selected in relation to those priorities, then it's different. But most schools don't have that. They hammer out things that they can agree on, and hopefully they have enough key people who are willing to work towards them. I think that some of the attitudes towards university cooperation had to be dealt with. Plus the fear that their routines were going to be interfered with caused enough scepticism initially, that we had to in the first year show that it would work and that it would be mutually advantageous, not just for staff of McKernan schools and the university, but also the students at both institutions.

Don weighed the advantages and disadvantages of his decision to make participation in the partnership voluntary for staff:

> I think that the operation could have matured sooner if I had taken a bit stronger position with regard to implementing the concept. But we let it evolve rather than make it an expectation of staff. In the long term that has a bigger payoff, but I think that my leadership could have been somewhat stronger in the initial year or two.

He also looked at the issue in terms of his tenure as principal, noting that staffs typically tend to guard against reacting too enthusiastically to new leadership to avoid casting a negative reflection on the quality of previous programs. While Don could realistically promote this innovation during his second year as principal, he felt it would probably have met with strong resistance during his first year.

As the third year of the partnership began, Don was pleased with the evolution of the work:

> [The] whole project has matured, and everyone sees it as win-win. Not win for some and lose for others. I think that everyone agrees that any secondment time,

> disruption from regular schedules, and other constraints are worth it. It's interesting to emphasize too that in the three years the program has operated, the school has been crowded. The university staff and students have been willing to accept what kind of accommodation we have available for them, and the students and staff at McKernan have been very accepting of the fact that some instructional programs might be interrupted or changed as a result of the project going on. But in retrospect, I think that everyone looks back on that as something that was very worthwhile. . . .

Organization of the First Three Years of the Project

Scheduling

In the first years of the McKernan project, Marg called it a cooperative venture, as she and the teachers looked for ways of organizing the work of the education students with the school children in ways that were beneficial for all involved, with the least possible disruption for the teachers. Knowing the teachers' resentment of official meetings, Marg attempted to speak with the teachers on a casual, drop-in basis during their preparation periods.

During the first two years, the project occurred during January, with the education students beginning their curriculum-and-instruction courses on-campus for three weeks before re-locating to McKernan School. In the first year, the McKernan-based part of the curriculum-and-instruction courses was two weeks long; in the second year, it was three weeks long. When some teachers felt that three weeks was too long, the third year's stay was arranged to be two weeks again. [By the fifth year of the project, the teachers wanted more time with the education students, and the project time was increased to four of the six weeks of the integrated term.]

In the first two years, the McKernan stay began with a "shadow day" (as discussed in Chapter 1), pairing each education student with a McKernan student. Marg was confident, based on the feedback she received from her students, of the value of the "shadow day." In addition to learning about the junior high students themselves, as Alice discussed in Chapter 1, Marg noted that the education students also learned about the larger organizational picture and communication within a school: on one occasion, an education student shadowed a boy who had tests or quizzes in five classes, while another did group work in five of her classes. These education students, after such repetition in the course of a school day, began to ask questions about how to improve the overall structuring and communication within a school to prevent such occurrences. Despite her confidence in the value of the shadow day, however, Marg was aware of one teacher who had felt that the day caused too much disruption in the school. She deleted it from the schedule for the third year. Though other teachers spoke of the benefit of the shadow day, Marg wanted to send a clear message to the school staff that the project would meet their needs and not interfere with their work; anything felt to be a problem for any teacher could be reworked or omitted.

The third year brought a significant change in the scheduling of the project, as Marg's curriculum-and-instruction courses were scheduled for the first term of the school year. The education students were to be on-campus for three weeks, during which time Principal Don Vinge and Vice-Principal Mary Neely visited their class to tell them about McKernan School and the class had an orientation and planning day at McKernan. The education students then worked at McKernan for the last week of September and the first week of October, before beginning their student teaching practica. In December, following their practica, the class met again for one week on-campus.

This shift to September meant increased difficulty in planning, as the McKernan teachers' schedules and classes changed in the first week of the term as a new teacher was hired to handle the unexpected increase in student enrolment. For Marg, this meant extra difficulty in arranging schedules for her students; for the McKernan teachers, it meant that the education students would be in their classes when teachers were just beginning to know their students. The teachers looked for ways to use this situation to their advantage, as it afforded them some non-teaching time to observe their students.

Work with teachers and students

Marg recalled that when she first met with language arts teachers to plan work for the project, three teachers immediately saw possibilities for work with their students and another volunteered after thinking about it a bit more. The education students worked with the classes of three language arts teachers and one social studies teacher. One of the language arts teachers, having read Nancie Atwell's In the Middle, had begun a writers workshop in her classes; she brought education students in as conferencing partners for her students. This teacher found the addition of the education students to her classroom to be helpful both to her and to her students; in beginning to implement a writers workshop, she was having difficulty "getting around to" her students adequately on her own. Another language arts teacher, Florence Iftody, also brought the education students in as helpers for her writing instruction. She asked education students to work one-on-one with her grade 8 students in a paragraph-writing assignment. A grade 7 language arts teacher, Gerry Bell, developed a "choose your own adventure story" unit, which Gerry had planned. In the unit, Gerry had written the first paragraph of a story, which the students then developed. Marg taught the unit opening (due to Gerry's illness that day), which involved brainstorming ideas for developing the story.

In the second year of the project, due to staff transfers, only Gerry and Florence were still involved from the first year. Florence kept the education students working in much the same structure as the preceding year, while Gerry changed her structure. Gerry had developed a unit on fables, which she made available to the education students. She asked them to teach a ten-lesson unit on fables to her grade 7 class, using any of her resources or developing their own. Additionally, Stuart Capstick was transferred to junior high from McKernan's elementary grades. He began to use a writers workshop approach with his grade 7s, bringing the education students in as conference partners. Don Garry, who had opted not to work with the education students in the first year, invited them in in the second year, also as conference partners. In the third year of the project, then, all four of the junior high language arts teachers were again involved, Don and Stuart for the second time, and Florence and Gerry for the third time.

Teachers Talk about Their Involvement

Contributing to teacher education

When asked about the reasons for their involvement with the partnership with Marg's education students, each of the four junior high language arts teachers spoke with feeling about their own dismal student teaching experiences. They all felt that their pre-service teacher preparation programs, in diverse places and times, had been inadequate, and all recounted the typical "horror" stories of student teaching: expectations that they would imitate a cooperating teacher's teaching style rather than develop their own, unreasonable teaching loads with inadequate preparation time, and discomfort with role-playing "teacher-as-authority" with students when they were treated by the cooperating teacher as apprentices. All four teachers indicated a desire to contribute positively to teacher education "so that others will have a much more pleasant passage," as Stuart said.

They saw this contribution in the partnership project as a different type than is afforded by the traditional cooperating teacher-student teacher model. They spoke of the importance of extended small-group work with children as a means of learning about children and teaching before facing a full-class teaching situation. Florence and Stuart regularly serve as cooperating teachers, but both felt that an experience such as this project ought to precede the conventional evaluated practicum, where the student teacher's performance becomes a central issue. Florence spoke of the education students' willingness to take risks, risks which student teachers are often too inhibited to take because of the performance pressure of evaluations. She noted that some of her student teachers have not achieved in eight weeks the confidence that the education students typically achieve in two weeks.

For Gerry, the project work with the education students afforded an opportunity to participate in teacher education while her schedule of teaching and counselling did not allow her to take student teachers. Her time as guidance counsellor accounted for most of her workload, and she felt too much of a time constraint even to share a student teacher with another teacher. She compared her past experience in taking student teachers unfavourably with her work with the education students: she noted the artificiality of the student teacher's status and situation within the classroom. For her, the project offered a double advantage in allowing her to contribute to teacher education in a "natural" way while still fitting into her schedule as counsellor and teacher.

Don, who of all the teachers worked most directly and intensively with this class of education students, did not take student teachers regularly. He spoke of his disapproval of the requirement that the cooperating teacher assess the student teacher, a situation he termed "artificial." Don questioned how professional and open the relationship can ever be when a cooperating teacher evaluates a student teacher. He compared this artificiality with the more satisfying focus on learning in the project.

Gerry Bell: "I also want them to see this joy"

In the first year of the project, Gerry Bell structured a unit in which the education students worked with her students in writing an action adventure story. During the time in which the education students were at McKernan, however, Gerry became ill and Marg took over the teaching and supervision of her classes.

During the second year, the education students who worked with Gerry planned and taught a unit on fables to her grade 7s. The feedback Gerry received from her students and from the education students encouraged her to keep the basic idea for the third year, although the unit was to be taught in seven class periods rather than the ten of the preceding year.

In her assessment of the benefits of the project, Gerry focused upon her students:

> One of the things I like best about the project, maybe it's selfish, is the opportunity for my kids to actually be heard. Having three or four kids there in a group, each one of them had the opportunity to say what they thought, to question, and to have that question responded to there in that class. They got individual attention.

Gerry's use of the word "selfish" puzzled me, so I asked her to explain. She replied that she had allowed Marg's class to come into her class to benefit her class:

> It's selfish for me because I wanted them to have that opportunity to have an individual teacher instead of just me there not being able to respond to every single one or to draw each one out of their shell in a class period. It takes so long to get to know the kids personally, to twig to [how to] get them involved. From that point of view, I really enjoyed having the [education] students there; it was more a question of what they could do for me than what I could do for them.

Gerry also saw benefits to herself as a teacher in working with the education students. As in the past with her student teachers, the education students helped her to keep up with current thinking about language arts education. More importantly, for herself as a teacher, she was able to use the time when the education students were teaching her children to observe them and learn more about them, how they interact with adults, and how they seem to learn best. This observation time, she felt, was especially valuable early in the year, with the project proceeding in September rather than January.

Nearing retirement age, Gerry was concerned about the need for a teacher education program to help beginning teachers cope with the additional stress and demands placed upon teachers in recent years. She spoke with great feeling both about her love of teaching and her fatigue caused by the additional external burdens upon teachers' shoulders, burdens such as administrative loads, responsibility for extra-curricular activities, and the social problems of children in dysfunctional families. These stresses, Gerry noted, will certainly contribute to teacher burn-out unless beginning teachers can somehow find the strength to focus upon the teaching itself, which "can provide a marvelous sense of purpose:"

> I love teaching. I'm tired of the externals, but I can't imagine being tired of teaching. There's a big difference. Maybe today's kids have to be trained differently. I can't see today's kids coming out and teaching for thirty-five years without being burnt out. I see today's kids being burnt out after fifteen, maximum twenty, years teaching, because more and more is expected. When I started teaching, I didn't have to be on call twenty-four hours a day. If I wanted to have a team, basketball, etc., everybody was excited. But it wasn't expected. Now if you won't do it, they'll find someone else who will. The kids coming out now will be meeting-ed to death, activity-ed to death. There'll be a million things that take priority over the classroom. Externals. . . . [To cope with this stress,] you need strong support at home, outside activities. . . . What do people really need? Love and a sense of purpose. Teaching can provide a marvelous sense of purpose. How will teachers cope with all this? You want to show the student teachers the adventure of it, the never-ending curriculum. . . .

In her desire to provide an opportunity for the education students to experience the creativity of planning for their own classrooms, Gerry offered support and enthusiasm. She supplied them with material she had used over the years in various fable units, offering them the choice of using, adapting, or omitting any of her materials, as well as of developing their own materials. In describing her own teaching style, Gerry stressed her creativity and multi-sensory approach to planning and teaching, so she was conscious of the need to make creative decisions:

> They could teach directly from it or use parts or make their own [materials], as long as my students get the reading and writing skills which they are going to need in order to express their ideas clearly, intelligently, and in an interesting manner. Most of those things were dealt with by the education students in their own way. It's most important that they have the opportunity to do that, because they get a curriculum and they have to decide how to develop that idea for themselves. . . . They have to decide how they are going to evaluate it. What students would have is a true-life experience from start to finish. A lesson doesn't just start with a story, or it doesn't just end with an exam. There are lots of different kinds of evaluations.

In providing an opportunity for education students to have a realistic planning experience, Gerry also spoke of the benefits of such work with beginning teachers:

> And if I can stimulate one young person coming out of university to be themselves and not worry about the curriculum as being the Bible or the principal being God. To look at the students as people and try to get them to learn, just to want to learn to read and write. Just to spark curiosity in them. You know, obviously, I'm not a miracle worker; I don't reach everybody. . . but you don't know who you are reaching. It's exciting, it's really exciting, the lives that you touch. And with these [education] students coming in, they know it's hard work. They have got to see reality right now. But I also want them to see this joy, the satisfaction of creating from their own minds.

Florence Iftody: "'Hands-on' experiences with children"

Florence Iftody recalled that when Marg first spoke with the language arts teachers, "teachers were sceptical" because of the potential for additional work in their already overburdened workloads in a very hectic school schedule. She recalled that she was eager to participate, however, for an opportunity to have an impact on teacher education. "I got into education to change the system," she laughed, ruefully noting that few of us ever "change the system," and the project would be a chance to do things a bit differently.

In that first year of the project, when education students worked one-on-one with several of Florence's classes in a paragraph writing unit, Florence found that the education students did not have the technical background she thought necessary for teaching the paragraph writing unit. Though she retaught the material afterward, Florence still found benefits in the work: "The students gained in friendship, and that was important in that class." Her class was quite large, with thirty-five students, and "they seemed to be lonely kids, for whatever reasons, with low self-esteem." The personal attention and support given by the education students, in Florence's eyes, helped her class.

In the following year, however, Florence tried to remedy the problem she perceived by providing the education students with the unit for teaching. Marg also worked with her students on the background knowledge needed for teaching the unit. Florence found that year the unit went better, though still not a complete success in terms of the teaching. She gave her students the same end-of-unit exam as she had the previous year, and the students scored much better on it. She knew that her additional structuring and Marg's work with the students had made a difference. Still, she focused upon the problem of content knowledge in teacher preparation, stating, "Teachers must know what they are teaching. Otherwise students corner them, and I saw that happen with the education students." She focused upon the need for education students to be taught "technical knowledge," such as methods of paragraph development, at university.

Florence's structuring for the third class of education students was quite different from the work of the previous years. Florence cited time constraints in explaining that these education students would be responsible for planning, teaching, and evaluating a thematic mini-unit with her grade 9 students: "They'll learn how to plan, be organized." She met with the education students to discuss the overall structure, giving them a choice of themes while noting that her students were already doing some work with the concept of "appearance and reality," as well as highlighting some available resources. She required the education students to show her their final unit plans for approval. Florence was enthusiastic about the thematic unit because it would help education students learn to plan "realistic and manageable" units. In the past, she had found planning to be a problem area for her student teachers and felt that this was a particular lack in their university education.

Florence saw the education students' work with her classes primarily in terms of her contribution to teacher education, as a way of providing a "hands-on" opportunity for the education students to learn about junior high children, so that "they approach the kids with less fear, more confidence." She also saw a benefit for her students, that they would "learn to be more human with strangers." She noted that students become overly attached to their teacher's particular ways of working and often resist working with others. She wanted to discourage over-dependence upon one teacher.

Stuart Capstick: "A good place to start"

In the second year of the McKernan project, Stuart Capstick began teaching at the junior high level after fifteen years at the elementary level. Despite the need to acquaint himself with a junior high school language arts curriculum that had changed considerably over the years, Stuart agreed to become involved with the project: "I've taught for a long time, so working with students in my room, with university people in my room, doesn't particularly concern me." As he began implementing a writers workshop approach to teaching writing, he found the presence of the education students helped him to clarify his program:

> I found that having students in my room last year made me justify to myself why I was doing things. So this year in spite of the fact that students are here so early and my classes are still settling down, I have no hesitation to saying, "Yes, you are welcome. If I don't have time to talk to you, I will tell you to sit down and . . . we'll get back later."

Stuart noted that the education students of the past year were focused upon the children and were eager to discuss their observations:

> I found last year that in about half of the classes that university students were in, they wanted just to stand and talk to me; the rest of the time they wanted time with the kids. They were exploring ideas. They would see things with the students and they would come and ask me what they've seen. They wanted to know why some people sat and worked and why others didn't.

Arriving in January, those education students found classes that were settled and accustomed to Stuart's approach and to the routines of a writers workshop. By then, as most students found ideas for writing and began their writing easily, Stuart asked the education students to work with the grade 7s in building editing and proofreading skills. What happened was not actually what he had planned, but he was positive about the value of the work:

> What I wanted the university people to do was really look at building editing skills and having students really proof read work. Even in the middle of the year with grade 7, I was finding that proof reading simply meant you wrote a rough copy and then you wrote it out again as closely as you possibly could but in legible writing. So I had the students looking at that. What I think happened as much as anything else was that the university students looked at content rather than proof read, which is fine because they are here to learn, and I don't have any qualms about them doing that.

Stuart found the students in both his grade 7 classes were positive and worked well with the education students, though they responded in slightly different ways at first. In retrospect, he was sure that he had introduced the education students to both classes in the same manner and had set out clear expectations for the work they would do together. He felt that the students in his homeroom, unofficially the more "academic" class, were especially positive right from the beginning:

> They said, 'This is really good for us; we can talk to these people like we talk to you.' In the other class, the students always want[ed] to know "why" first and were more suspicious at the start.

At the beginning of the third year of the project, Stuart found that his present classes worked in very different ways from the preceding year's groups, so he asked the education students to work in a slightly different way in his writers workshops. He compared the two years' groups:

> I got a real shock at the start of this year. The kids are enthusiastic and they want to work, but they want to be directed. And, of course, the whole thrust of the Atwell approach is that you don't direct. And last year's kids said, "You know, get out and leave us alone, we'll do it." [Laughs] So I guess in education, you tend to say that as soon as you know what the game is, they change the rules. And it's meant that my first two weeks have been totally different than what I had planned in Language Arts, and so what I have done is sort of fall back on the other subject I teach--social--and I generated language arts work from social studies . . . . This year, because of the way the students have reacted, what I have asked Marg's students to do is to work on generating ideas and the story opening.

For Stuart, having the education students work in his writers workshop classes benefitted his students, as they could receive individual help from another adult. In inviting the education students into his classroom, however, he was careful to advise them on how to talk with his students about their writing. He was concerned that the education students develop the tact necessary not be too directive about a student's work, a tact he knew would develop with experience:

> And the thing that I will say to the university students this afternoon is that this is the sort of stuff that I want, but please do it in such away that you are not telling the kids that this is not a good opening, that "This is the way that it ought to be done," because particularly at this time of year, the kids listen to teacher. Teacher is still always right.

Stuart recounted his own terrible experiences as a student teacher subjected to unreasonable demands from his cooperating teacher. These experiences made him conscious of the importance of providing education students with a chance to have a positive experience with children:

> I would like them to come in and have fun. I'd like them to enjoy what they are doing, to have as much success as they can. [Even] if their only success is to find that they can relate to kids, that's a really good place to start. You know, if they don't see the work, they won't see end products. I'm not sure that I ever do either. But, if they feel good about being in a classroom, and they feel good about having these little midgets, twenty-five of them, coming up to them and saying, "Hey, look at this," because they are a trustworthy person, then that's really what I want these people to get out of it. . . . They will come up to situations [in student teaching] where I'm sure people will say, "Here is what I want you to teach, and by golly, here is how you are going to teach it." And I don't think that's a reasonable thing to do.

Don Garry: ". . . suddenly a bond was forming"

In the first year of the McKernan project, Don Garry opted not to become involved. He saw the project as "almost an intrusion" and preferred to concentrate on his involvement with his own students. By the second year of the project, however, Don had read Nancie Atwell's In the Middle, which convinced him of the value of more conference partners for writers, providing more feedback for their work. He invited the education students to work as conference partners with his two classes of writers workshop, a course that grade 8 students could choose as an option:

> And I think the students learned a lot about what kids here were writing, thinking. And, you know, suddenly a bond was forming. They were friends; they couldn't wait for me to get back into the class so they could talk to me about what they were doing.

In the third year of the project, Don planned to continue the writers workshop conferencing but with a significant addition:

> I think they're [the McKernan students] really going to benefit from a little bit of feedback. But also I'm going to ask Marg's students to assess this time. [They will] work as a partner for a week, and then when they receive the stuff they've been working on with the student, they're going to have to assess. So they have

> to figure out the line that's drawn there. Where do you stop the kind of nudging and start to become the assessor? And I was just talking with the students about how difficult that is and how difficult it is to mark work that is done in a writers workshop. You're forced to give marks.

I noted that the assessment sends a message to education students and to the school children: it says that the education student is qualified to make the assessment. It also, however, provides a gradual introduction to assessment, typically a source of much anxiety for student teachers who are required to assess many papers without understanding students' intentions for or understanding of the assignment. With a limited number of papers to assess, and with the additional understanding that comes with working through drafts of the writing, the education students would be somewhat supported in their assessment.

In this third year of the project, Don also initiated a project for his grade 8 students to do in partnership with the education students. He developed a "sentence demon" project, in conjunction with Marg (as discussed in Chapter 6), in which the grade 8s would study "demons" of grammar usage:

> The [education] students who will be working with my grade 8s are dealing with tough stuff, skills which most teachers really don't like to teach, let's face it. But if we can do it in a creative way that takes some of the tedium out of it, then that will be great. And . . . I wouldn't try it if I didn't have an [education student] teacher in each of the groups as a leader, because I don't know if it would have worked. . . . I want to see if it works. As I said, I didn't tell Marg's students that I'm just experimenting with it, I really want them to feel that this is going to work. They have already come up with good ideas and I got a little competitive spirit going on there because everyone wants their group to be the best, and I think that is great.

As Don discussed the benefits to his students, the teaching content was his first concern. He was aware of other benefits, but those followed after the content:

> And I want them [the students] to be creative, and I think that's the important thing, but I also want the writing to go on, and even though you're teaching skills, they'd better be teaching skills so that the kids are using writing to demonstrate, to deal with, the skills. . . . I think my students are going to learn these skills, first of all. That's important because I want them to know these skills; I want them to be improving as writers. But, secondly, I think they're going to realize that you can work with adults, they can be helpful and they can be partners and they don't have to be policemen like some teachers are. I'm pretty strict in my classroom. I have to be a disciplinarian, especially with classes of thirty, there's no other way. But I want them to see that there is fun in groups, and yet a group can achieve a purpose.

In structuring a group project in September that he felt would only work if his students had adult guidance and support, Don was extending his confidence in the work with the education students, taking a calculated risk and structuring the assignment carefully to ensure its success as much as possible. After one year's work with the education students, he had traveled far from being a teacher who saw them as "an imposition" in the first year of the project to one who exploited the possibilities of structuring a project that depended upon the presence of the education students. While the other language arts teachers seemed to structure work that was assisted by the presence of the education students, Don structured work that he would not have attempted without them in his classroom. Sensitive to the need of the education students to have confidence in their work, he carefully chose not to tell them that he was taking a risk. [This group project was a turning point in Don's teaching in that afterwards he no longer taught grammar skills out of the context of student writing. While his emphasis for this group work was on the content, the real learning for the education students, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, involved the structuring of groups and the importance of language in learning.]

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT FOR THE EDUCATION STUDENTS

The final context to discuss concerning the McKernan project of the Fall term, 1989 is that of the education students who enrolled in the integrated program in language arts education that term. In Chapter 4, the composition of the class, the students' initial thoughts about teaching language arts, the class assignments, and the proceedings of the class during the weeks on-campus will be detailed.

Composition of the Class

In the September, 1989 class of secondary language arts majors in the integrated program of curriculum-and-instruction courses and practicum, there were twenty-three students, of whom three were male and twenty were female. Ages varied considerably, from three women who had adolescent or teen-age children, to the majority of the class who were in their early twenties. As a group, Marg noted, the class was younger than her previous group.

When the class introduced themselves to each other, I realized that the group was quite different in educational experience from the nine members of the preceding class whom I had interviewed. [Of those nine, eight were after-degree students (with a B.A. already earned and currently working toward a B.Ed. degree and/or teaching certification).] Of the twenty-three members of this class, only two had already completed bachelor's degrees. The current students included nine who had begun their post-secondary education at colleges and had transferred to the University of Alberta.

When the students introduced themselves, most indicated where they had attended high school; in many cases they were from small rural communities.

I was interested in the differences between this group and the preceding one. While the education students in my initial interviews had chosen to participate in the McKernan project, the class which convened in September, 1989, had no option if they chose to take the curriculum-and-instruction courses that term; thus, they did not constitute a volunteer group. Marg indicated that the preceding group had a more balanced male-female ratio, as well as many after-degree students who were slightly older and with more varied work experience than this group possessed. Because so many students in this group had transferred into university from smaller two-year colleges, they had only one year in which to accustom themselves to the workings and opportunities of a large urban university.

The class responded to Marg's request that they introduce themselves to each other by "tell[ing] about yourself, where you come from, where you went to high school or college, what your minor is, and something about you and language arts--a book or movie that you like, etc." As the introductions progressed, the students became more relaxed and more inclined to pick up a thread of a preceding student's comment. There were a variety of minor subject specialties. Several students spoke of themselves as writers: Barbara introduced herself unequivocally by saying, "I am a poet," and Joanne said that she enjoyed writing poetry. Kate spoke of her passion for reading and writing, adding that she was currently writing a fantasy for adolescents. A common refrain among students was that although they loved to read, they found little time for reading for pleasure with the pressures of university work. Michael was alone in saying, "I've just recently discovered that I like reading." The students' work experience was varied, with several having had teaching experiences such as instructing swimming or aerobics or being a teacher aide.

Pre-course Thoughts on Teaching Language Arts

At my request, Marg agreed to structure some writing time into the beginning of the first class meeting to allow me to obtain information about the thinking of the students as they began their integrated term. We set up the writing to minimize the amount of context she supplied, to avoid steering their responses. After very briefly introducing herself and welcoming the students to the courses on the first day, she invited them to write for a few minutes "to reflect on your current thinking about teaching language arts." The writing, for which she provided no-carbon-required paper, would give students "a record to look back on at the end of the term, after your work at McKernan and student teaching." Marg indicated that the writing would not be graded and that students could keep one copy of it for their interest, perhaps taped into a journal as the first entry. [At the end of the term, as students wrote their final papers to synthesize their understanding about teaching and learning language arts, I saw several students referring to this initial writing for a reference point in tracking their changing thinking.] The class spent twenty minutes working on three questions, which were as follows:

> 1. In what ways did your phase II student teaching experiences influence you as a language arts teacher?
> 2. What kind of language arts teacher do you want to become?
> 3. What expectations do you have for ED CI 353/354 to help you become the language arts teacher you want to be?

Question one

Students interpreted the first question in various ways, some discussing how their phase II student teaching experiences influenced their teaching in general and others addressing the teaching of language arts in particular. In phase II student teaching, students are normally placed in junior high schools to teach in their minor subject area for four weeks. However, due to scheduling difficulties, many students find themselves in senior high schools and/or teaching their major subject during phase II. Of those students who taught in their minor subjects, some saw connections between language arts and the other subjects, while others noted that they had not taught language arts in phase II, the implication being that they could not learn about teaching language arts from teaching other subjects.

Students found various connections among language arts and other disciplines. Lorraine wrote of her discovery that literature is valuable in her social studies classes:

> . . . I realized how enthusiastic I am about what we can discover through fiction and non-fiction. Although I was teaching social studies, I found myself integrating language arts into the class with various excerpts of literature. I was excited to see how this literature broadened our understanding and increased our interest. . . .

Barbara, teaching biology, found that "English is everywhere! Writing is an important vehicle to work out the thought process." In teaching drama, Britt realized that dramatizing fiction and poetry in the classroom will help to bring literature to life for her students. Joanne taught French and language arts during her phase II teaching, and she appreciated the opportunity to use some of the same methods in both subject areas.

A few students who taught language arts learned by negative example. Arlene wrote:

> Teaching LA in phase II was a valuable experience in that it gave me a small taste of how boring LA can be for students and the kind of energy and thought that goes into making it more interesting. The program we were in at the time focused on grammar and spelling, etc. I discovered that anybody can teach something that interests students, but it takes someone with a

> great deal of enthusiasm and creativity to teach something students consider boring.

For most of the students, the experience of phase II student teaching provided lessons in understanding students, in general teaching skills, and in being a teacher; these lessons would influence their teaching regardless of subject matter. Annette, commenting that secondary school students are quite emotional, found them to be "strongly affected by certain readings as well as their own writing. I want them to talk and write about themselves." Kate, struck by the number of her students who had jobs, found that they came to class unprepared with homework. She concluded, "I would like to give these students a chance to do more writing in school, in all subjects but especially in language arts." Many students wrote of their growing appreciation for individual differences in learning styles among students and from one class to another. Several students commented upon the importance of "motivating" students, noting that students do learn and want to learn when they find the material interesting.

Several students noted learning the rudiments of lesson planning during their phase II experiences. Marlaine in particular saw her phase II teaching as a first step:

> [Phase II] marked the beginning of my development of my own style of presentation and was a good introduction to practical lesson planning and the setting of lesson objectives.

Dave referred to his reliance upon his own "skeleton lesson plans," which he knew to be inadequate for teaching excellence. In discussing lesson planning, several students commented upon the need for teachers to have a broad and solid "knowledge base," about which these students felt somewhat insecure. Student teaching taught them, as Robin wrote, that "I didn't know it all, and that which I did know had to somehow be presented so that my students could comprehend it."

In general, students took from their phase II student teaching lessons concerning their understanding of adolescents and the influence of that understanding on the teacher's structuring of course content. They presented a picture of students as individuals who are easily bored but who want to learn material relevant to their own concerns.

Question two

In writing about the kinds of teachers they wanted to become, the education students presented an idealistic picture of the language arts teacher as a caring, creative, interesting role model to students. Many commented, seemingly in response to their phase II experiences, upon their desire not to bore students. A few, such as Ruth, saw good teachers in broader terms as those who help students "to connect with universal concepts."

In their comments, the education students focused upon literature as the primary activity of the language arts classroom. Many wrote of their desire to share "the joys of reading" and "to pass on a love of literature" to students, as well as "to help make books come alive." Anya wrote of the love of literature being "infectious." Judy's goal was that her students "grow in their view and understanding of people and the world through the study of literature."

While "passing on" a love of literature was central to most of the students' ideal of themselves as language arts teachers, fewer included other areas of language arts in their comments. Several saw language arts teachers as role models of readers, but Robin was unique in portraying the language arts teacher's language itself as a model:

> I think the most important part of striving to be a good language arts teacher is in developing a language that is as concise as the textbooks suggest. All teachers are role models, but an English teacher is watched every day by his/her students for hints as to how to speak and write properly. If I convey mistakes

> in my use of language, the students will [learn] these errors and do them too.

Those who wrote about the importance of teaching writing did so primarily, as did Arlene, from a view of writing skills as necessary for functioning in the world. Betty, while writing of her enthusiasm for literature, also wrote of the importance of encouraging writing. The only three students who wrote with enthusiasm of the value of teaching writing were Barbara (who introduced herself to the class as a poet), Annette (who wrote of the importance of students writing about themselves), and Kate, (who wrote of her "passion for reading and writing"). Kate wrote of wanting to provide new experiences for her students "to help overcome the attitude that LA is only reading and writing. I want to assist students in living LA."

Question three

As would be expected, when asked about their expectations for the curriculum-and-instruction courses, students focused primarily upon learning skills for planning and organizing curriculum in their language arts classes. Having stated in response to question two that they wanted to be creative and interesting teachers, the education students sought methods of instruction that would help them live up to their goals, that would be "innovative," "new," or "exciting."

Several students specifically mentioned their desire to learn from their classmates by sharing ideas and experiences. Two students wanted to know about their professor's teaching experiences as well. Ruth looked to her professor as a role model:

> The course material must centre on methods of teaching language arts, but perhaps even more importantly, the instructor indirectly gives us the results of her own experience. The ways in which she instructs us will be added to our own arsenal of methods.

Several students noted their preference for "practical" learning; Kate hoped that the courses would provide both "book learning and hands-on experience." The focus of the class upon learning specific methods of teaching language arts was explicitly linked by several of them to helping raise their confidence in themselves as teachers.

The responses to question three were quite straightforward and unsurprising in their focus upon methods. The responses were general, with no comments that would indicate much prior knowledge of specific methods of instruction in language arts. The only two students who included specific requests were ones who had mentioned in question one their negative experiences teaching grammar lessons during phase II student teaching; these two students wanted to know how to teach grammar well.

Following the writing time, Marg spoke briefly of the upcoming work at McKernan School, of which students may or may not have been aware. She noted the schedule for the major components of campus-based classes, work at McKernan, and practicum for the term.

Assignments for the Courses

Administratively, the curriculum-and-instruction courses for secondary English language arts majors are divided into three-credit courses, ED CI 353/354 (currently EDSEC 329/330) and ED PRA 354. The ED PRA 354 is a credit/no credit course attached to the integrated program in each discipline in Secondary Education; students routinely earn the three credits for participation in activities the instructor considers relevant to his/her structuring of the integrated program. These three courses, together with credit for successful completion of the phase III practicum, comprise the student's entire courseload for one term. The curriculum-and-instruction classes meet for three hours daily for five weeks, followed by the eight-week practicum (which usually includes two afternoons of callbacks at the university), and one week of daily three-hour class meetings.

Among the packet of handouts from the first day's class meeting, Marg provided the education students with details of their assignments and the weighting of evaluation for each of the courses. The page of assignment information began with a paragraph concerning the centrality of writing for learning and journal writing. Students were assigned to keep a journal, in whatever format they found useful, which would provide a source of thinking and connection-making for their assignments. The journal itself would be ungraded. Marg stated that she would "be glad to read any entries you invite me to read."

The ED CI 353 course had two assignments, one due to be handed in before the students began their practicum and one at the completion of practicum. Their descriptions and weightings were as follows:

> **Writing Portfolio** (60%)
>
> A portfolio of four pieces about your learning, two related to McKernan and two related to text reading. I suggest that your journal be the source of the pieces. The two McKernan pieces should be specific to your experience at the school. The responses to readings should be specific to the two textbooks: either focus each response to one book or draw two themes across the two texts. The portfolio will be graded as a unit. I will read all your pieces as you do them if you want. Please submit at least one piece for feedback very early so I can provide some direction if you need it. Conferences with classmates and with me will be encouraged.
>
> **Reflection on Student Teaching and Course Readings**
>
> (40%) (Hand in two copies)
> Consolidate your thinking about teaching English language arts in a paper, drawing on your journal entries and readings to develop your ideas. The paper

> should be a synthesis of your coursework, your experience at McKernan, and your practicum.

The ED CI 354 course had two assignments, as follows:

> **Sharing Professional Knowledge** (35%)
>
> Prepare a professional handout on a topic from the list provided, based on library research. The audience is English language arts teachers, specifically those in the class. Be clear and be practical. Whether or not you include a bibliography for your classmates, be sure to acknowledge your sources and provide me with a bibliography. Xerox copies for your classmates.
>
> **Integrated Unit**
>
> Part A (45%)
> Develop a unit for a grade/course of your choice. Include goals, rationale, materials required, learning activities, evaluation strategies. Hand in the complete unit and provide a two-page overview for each of your classmates.
>
> Part B (20%)
> Critique your unit after your practicum experience in a MEMO TO MARG. If you taught the unit, show what you would change and/or did change. Comment on what worked and what that means for other teaching. If you did not teach it, apply your teaching experience with other units to this unit.

In addition, Marg provided several supplementary pages of relevant information. One was a listing of possible topics for the "professional knowledge" assignment. A page detailing the evaluation of writing portfolios was included, with additional information about the requirements for the portfolios as well as descriptors for each of the stanines (the University's nine-point grading system) and marks for the assignment. A rationale for writing portfolios as a means of evaluation of writing was included on this page, with references to relevant pages in the students' textbook. The grading sheet that Marg would use for the unit plan assignment was included, with a detailing of the possible apportionment of marks.

The primary textbooks for the courses were Stephen Tchudi and Diana Mitchell's Explorations in the Teaching of English and Nancie Atwell's In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents. Other required readings were the two Alberta curriculum guides for junior and senior high school language arts, the Faculty of Education's Phase III practicum handbook, and a package of readings from prominent English education journals. She distributed this package in class, noting that the readings would make a good start for their professional files, as well as suggesting that students would find subscriptions to professional journals helpful.

In addition to the assignment and evaluation information in the first-day packet of handouts, Marg provided a statement of goals and objectives for the courses, a breakdown of the course fees, information on important dates in the scheduling of the term and phone numbers for herself, McKernan School, and me.

The Courses On-Campus

In the first two weeks of the term, while the class was situated on-campus, I attended class sessions two or three times per week. During this time, I felt that I began to know the students individually and to become an accepted member of the group. [Two members of the class were students I had previously taught in the general teaching methods class, but the others were unknown to me at the beginning of the term.] Several students asked me to read portions of their journals at various times, and I was happy to oblige. Marg introduced me to the group on the first day of class, and I explained my reasons for joining their class, stressing my research interest as well as my willingness to act as a writing conference partner and resource. I asked permission to tape interviews and conversations during the term and to quote from their writing, offering anonymity in return for such permission. No one seemed hesitant about granting this permission, and later in the term I secured their written permission. I think that at this time most of the students saw me as a teaching assistant for Marg. I functioned halfway between professor and student, moving from one group to another when students were working in groups but refraining from steering discussions within groups.

Throughout these two weeks, the structure of the class was often that Marg would introduce a topic and give a presentation on it for the first part of the class, perhaps for part or most of the first hour. The students would then engage in an activity, such as working in a particular way with some literature or examining secondary school language arts textbooks individually or in groups of varying sizes, after which the class as a group would "debrief" the activity, exploring possible values for the structuring of the activity and extending variations of it for various contexts and purposes. In this way, Marg held many of her teaching decisions up for scrutiny. For example, when the class introduced themselves to each other, the introductions proceeded in a leisurely, almost social atmosphere, as the students gradually relaxed with each other. Marg then followed the introductions with questions about the purposes and possible additional information to be gained by the teacher in such introductions, initiating a discussion of how to begin building a sense of community, and in particular, a language arts-based community.

Language usage

I focused often on the language used during groupwork, in contrast to the more public full-class sessions. Often in groupwork, the students discussed issues in terms of "this is what my teacher did in high school," very personal and expressive language uses with issues contextualized in personal experience, which often seemed limited. For many, their experience of secondary language arts teachers was limited to one in junior high school (of whom they remembered little) and one in senior high school, whose methods were taken as the only possible language arts methods. Interestingly, this personalized, contextualized language was not used, as a rule, when the group reported back its discussions to the full-class grouping. The report-back, though not formal in tone or content, was often almost teacherly, as though the group reporter felt an obligation to "teach" their discussion to the class. In using expressive, highly personalized language first, the education students seemed to work through their personal experience; afterward, in the full-class context, they were better able to use more abstract language as they considered aspects of language arts teaching and learning that were beyond their personal experience.

As the two weeks progressed, I noticed an increasing use of student-to-student talk in full-class discussions, whereas in the first day or two, almost all comments were directed to Marg, even when comments referred back to the comments of another student. The students also began to feel confident enough to question, though tentatively, ideas that Marg suggested. The questioning was often couched in a disclaimer, "Maybe this is just my opinion, but . . . ." Marg maintained a positive, accepting tone in language and attitude as the students began to find their voices in discussing professional matters.

Visit from McKernan administrators

McKernan's principal, Don Vinge, and vice-principal, Mary Neely, visited the class to introduce the students to McKernan School. Don offered a general welcome to the school, saying that the staff and students were looking forward to working with the education students and that they all regard the McKernan project to be a valuable experience for all involved. He provided an overview of his experience in education. Mary then spoke of her experience as a teacher and administrator, stressing the need of educators to continue learning.

They provided a packet of handouts to each student, one that is given to all staff and parents of McKernan children. The school directory, in addition to including information concerning bus schedules, absentee procedures, calendar, fees, staff listing, and discipline, also contained prominent statements of the school's priorities and its language-for-learning philosophy. In explaining the directory and other handouts to the students, Don continually highlighted the importance of the school's language-for-learning philosophy, noting that improvement in the emphasis on "learning by doing" was an on-going focus of the staff. He spoke of the complexities of a ten-grade school, presenting a picture of a staff who continuously re-examine their practice and struggle to improve the school experiences of their students.

After Marg provided an overview of the upcoming orientation session at McKernan School with the language arts teachers, she opened the session for questions from her class. The questions they raised focused on themselves rather than on any points the administrators had mentioned about the school, revealing the education students' concerns with their roles at McKernan.

One student asked about the education students' relationship to the McKernan students; she worried about how much of a "barrier," or "distance" there ought to be. Marg's response was to wait and ask her former students who were scheduled to come to speak to the class the following day. Mary Neely's response was that the "distance" most likely wouldn't be a problem because "you will be 'old' to our kids." Don Vinge noted that respect for all adults and students in the school is an important part of McKernan's philosophy, placing the issue as one of respect, which is easy to discern, rather than "distance," which is artificial at best.

Another student wanted to confirm her understanding of the reason for the education students to be at McKernan School. She spoke of her understanding that they were to help the McKernan students in their language arts work and that they would see a school with a holistic language learning philosophy. While nodding confirmation of her statements, Don added that the program provided an opportunity for "active learning for all involved." Marg said that it was an opportunity "to be 'in the middle,' as Nancie Atwell says." Mary spoke of the work as an aid in "helping you develop your philosophy of education."

A third question, again underscoring the student's apprehension, was, "Should we ask students to call us by our first name or last?" The administrators and Marg left the choice up to the students, reminding them that as long as the relationships among school children and education students showed a foundation of respect, all would be fine. [As the education students later introduced themselves to the McKernan students, I noticed that most opted for formal titles, while many commented in the staff room or in their journals on the unfamiliarity of being addressed as "Miss" or "Mister."]

The session ended with expressions of appreciation from Marg and the students for the administrators taking the time to come to the university to meet with the class. I noted that the students had not taken the opportunity to ask questions about the school itself or about the children; this reminded me that the concerns of beginning teachers are most often their own "performance" and their own comfort in assuming the role of the teacher. In this situation, the education students needed to puzzle through their status, as they were to be neither and both teacher and student. Marg spoke of them being "in the middle," which was exactly what caused their initial discomfort. In a practicum, student teachers often "act the teacher" while they grow more comfortable with the role. As education students working at McKernan School, they had no available "script" to playact and so were left to the insecurities of their in-betweenness. When I had spoken with the education students from the preceding class, they had revelled in that "in the middle" status, but perhaps those students appreciated that status only in retrospect after student teaching. Surely the anxiety about status was natural and would only be relieved, if at all, as these education students began to find their ways into a comfortable role and appreciate the freedom from role expectations.

The following day, three former students visited the class to talk about their experiences at McKernan School, an invitation Marg issued in response to a suggestion made during my initial interviews. Again, the focus on self was evident. These former students also offered assurances that status would not be a problem, stressing that the McKernan project offered the opportunity to learn about kids without paying a price, either in performance evaluations or in discipline problems with large classes of children. Their advice was to get involved in everything possible.

Marg had been doubtful about the usefulness of this visit, and after seeing the insecurities of the education students, I was somewhat in agreement with her. Perhaps the only way to surmount the worries was to get on with the business at hand at McKernan. The education students were as ready as they could be to begin working at McKernan School.

PART II

NARRATIVES

Overview

> . . . (L)ives do not serve as models; only stories do that. And it is a hard thing to make up stories to live by. We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. . . . Whatever their form or medium, these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives.
> (Heilbrun, 1988, p.37)

> If in our lives we are constantly constructing, reporting, and revising various narrative unities, then education should somehow draw on, develop, remake, and introduce such narratives.
> (Connelly and Clandinin, 1984, p.191)

The importance of personal narrative in learning, both in recognizing what we already instinctively "know" and in learning possibilities for future actions, has been acclaimed in recent years in many disciplines. By constructing and examining personal narrative, we "script" stories of our lives--actions and possibilities, ways of being--that challenge convention and experience.

As education students work with school children, they begin to write the narratives of personal experience that will guide their future interactions as teachers with children. They begin from scripts of their own childhoods, as school children adopting the role of teacher and learning, gradually, to accept that role and to redefine it to suit themselves.

In the McKernan project, the language arts education students work with school children and teachers in unconventional ways, not as "student teacher" or "teacher," but as "university partner" or "group leader." By working in unscripted roles, the education students relinquish the security and constraints of conventional roles and are free (or forced to be free) to establish and examine individual relationships with school children. At McKernan School, education students begin or continue to write and speak their teaching narratives; they become acquainted with children whose faces and stories will follow them through their teaching and influence their sense of possibility in relating to future students.

In Part II "Narratives" I will recount the stories of the people who shared their stories with me--as I observed their plots unfold, as the main characters told me their stories, and as they wrote about their understanding of the developing "plots and themes" of their learning. My purpose in "Narratives" is to evoke the culture of the McKernan project as it was created by the participants, including myself, during this particular term. Recalling Max Weber's view of man as "an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun" and Clifford Geertz's view that those webs are our culture (1973, p.5), I will detail my observation of and participation in the spinning of webs at McKernan School.

As a researcher, as a self-appointed narrator, I certainly filter the narration through my particular lens, shaping and structuring it to suit a logic of my making, or at least in the case of a dissertation, of my acceptance. Selection necessitates rejection; inclusion of anecdotes and observations requires exclusion of other stories, other scenes. Selection is based upon a combination of design and circumstance, as I might chance upon a seemingly significant conversation and later deliberately follow up with an observation in hopes of discovering more meaning. Often, the significance emerged after the experience or conversation, sometimes long after it.

Though the selection and omission is of my choosing, I try in this "Narratives" section to let other people speak for themselves, to evoke both the flavour of an individual's language and thought and the flavour of the group's evolving culture. Just as James Britton admonishes against forcing our school children to "limp around in someone else's language," so I have tried not to force my language on others by substituting my words for theirs, my once-removed summaries for their lively dialogue. In a dissertation that focuses attention on language for learning, the language of the learning is vitally important.

Chapter 5 "Beginnings" details the initial experiences of the McKernan project for many of the participants, including the school teachers who worked with the education students, and the introduction of the education students to McKernan School. Chapter 6 "Working with Children and Teachers at McKernan School" details many of the interactions among school children, education students, school teachers, Marg, and myself. "Voices from Student Teaching" recalls the voices of the education students during and after their practicum experiences. After the practicum ended, the class regrouped for three days to attempt to synthesize their disparate learning of the term, again with much talking and writing.

CHAPTER 5

BEGINNINGS

Before the education students began their visit to McKernan School, Marg and the McKernan language arts teachers worked to organize the groupwork and individual work that the education students would do with the school students. In Chapter 5, I will detail the scheduling and incidental activities of the education students' work at McKernan, as well as their introduction to the school and the language arts teachers.

Scheduling

Marg accomplished the "footwork" of scheduling by stopping off at McKernan, usually before the school day began or after classes ended in the afternoon; she spoke of the need to minimize organizational details for the teachers, particularly at the beginning of the school. She checked each teacher's schedule and tried to be available at a convenient time for the people she needed to see. By her records, she spent fifty hours getting the project scheduled and organized for this term.

In working out the arrangements for her students' work with the McKernan students, Marg's questions for the McKernan teachers were, "What would be useful to have the education students work on with your students? What can you accomplish with four or five interested adults in your classroom that you cannot otherwise do?" She tried to respond to the teacher's initiatives for the project rather than to impose an agenda of her own. She reminded the teachers that her students would gain by whatever contact, whatever work they did with the school students.

I witnessed the genesis of one project in a chance meeting with Don Garry one day early in September. Marg and I were at McKernan after school to meet with the administrators when we saw Don in the hall. After a few pleasantries, he asked whether we had a minute.

"Sure," Marg smiled calmly. My stomach went into knots, because I was on a tight schedule [to pick up my daughter from day care] and the administrators were already late. "We have to fit into their schedules," she reminded me quietly.

Don suggested that the education students help teach grammatical terms and concepts to his grade 8 classes. "Make a list of what terms you want to deal with and we'll talk about ideas," Marg suggested. Ten minutes later, as we sat in the principal's office with the administrators, Don interrupted to bring Marg the list; they agreed to speak later about developing a project for his classes. Afterward, Marg expressed her delight that Don had initiated this work with her students. Until this point, she felt that the McKernan teachers had acted cooperatively with her and with the administrators. Here, however, was a sign that Don was assuming joint ownership of the project, helping to shape it for his own classroom needs, working in collaboration. The "sentence demon" work grew from this initiative.

The schedule Marg drew up, after getting the language arts teachers' final teaching schedules, placed each education student into the classrooms of at least two junior high language arts teachers. In addition, volunteers were slotted as schedules allowed, into Don's writers workshop option and Naomi Mullin's grade 6 class. An overview of the work in each class is provided here, but the work is explained in more detail in the appropriate section of this text.

In each of Don's three grade 8 classes, five to seven education students were assigned as "university partners" to act as group leaders and resource people as the students prepared a lesson and presentation on a particular grammatical "sentence demon." Additionally, in Don's grade 9 writers workshop option class, six education students participated as writing conference partners.

Stuart was finding that many students in his grade 7 language arts class were not yet able to find and develop topics for writing. He asked for education students who would work with two classes of his students to get them started on topics. Six education students were scheduled into each section.

Education students who worked with Florence's classes were to develop and teach a thematic mini-unit. Six education students were scheduled into two of her classes; five others were scheduled into the third class. This arrangement afforded the six students the opportunity to teach the same lessons to two groups. She gave much latitude to the education students in planning and teaching the mini-unit, requiring only that the work culminate in a tangible display and that it be evaluated by the education students.

With the eleven education students assigned to work with her grade 7 students, Gerry repeated the basic structure of the preceding year's work with the education students. Her grade 7s were working on a short "fables" unit; the unit would have to be streamlined, as the preceding year's groups had ten classes in which to do the unit, but a grade 7 trip left only seven class periods for this year's fables unit.

In addition to their work with junior high language arts classes, the education students were also invited to work with two other classes on a more casual basis. Mary Neely asked for education students to work with her one grade 8 social studies class. They were working on a cooperative learning project, already in progress when the education students arrived at McKernan, and Mary asked for education students to work with her students as conferencing partners to help them refine their ideas for the projects. As this work was done on a drop-in basis, and the schedules of the education students were already fairly full, not many members of the class were able to oblige. Of those who did drop in for conferencing, they did so only once or twice, and so had little investment in the class work. I found that there was little discussion of it among the education students.

In Naomi's grade 6 class the previous year, education students had worked with the grade 6 students to prepare and present readers theatre scripts of Chinese folktales during a unit on China. Pleased with this work, Naomi wanted the education students to work again with readers theatre presentations. Again, scheduling was difficult, so several education students who were keen to work with Naomi's class were not able to do so. Ultimately, six education students participated in this work.

McKernan Activities

During the two weeks of the education students' work at McKernan School, the school days were interrupted by most of the usual and some unusual activities. The daily timetabling was established, having undergone several revisions since the first week of September. All windows were being replaced, which meant a daily disruption as workers commandeered rooms and classes were relocated. The morning bulletin for teachers listed "severe window warnings" to advise teachers of these changes. The grade 7 students spent three school days and a weekend at Camp YoWoChas as an orientation to the school and as a means of helping the students, upon entering junior high school with new schoolmates, to meet one another and make new friends. Various class assignments (e.g., nature studies in science, journals in language arts classes) had been made to make the excursion an integral part of the students' class work, and staff members chaperoned the group.

The education students and Marg fit into the daily changes and helped whenever possible. Marg served as Stuart's substitute teacher, thereby "giving something back" as well as providing her students with an opportunity to see her teaching at the junior-high level. When the first fire drill of the year occurred, the education students came from the staff room and helped to keep order among students who were delighted to have an unscheduled break. During the two-week stay of the education students, Gerry Bell arranged for an Edmonton Journal reporter to visit the school to observe and report on the McKernan project.

At Marg's suggestion, the education students invited the school staff to a "thank you" social after school the next-to-last day of their stay. Marg's attention to the courtesies that go beyond the professional arrangements set a tone among the education students that they maintained throughout their time together.

Welcome to McKernan

The education students' two weeks at McKernan began with an orientation session in the school library. As education students arrived, they clustered in small groups at tables, chatted quietly in "library" voices, and seemed a bit nervous. Marg handed out their individualized schedules. The McKernan junior high language arts teachers sat as a panel at a table in the front, and two elementary teachers, Patricia Rijavec and Naomi Mullins, sat off to the side; finally, Don Garry, as language arts coordinator, opened the session by welcoming the education students to the school.

"The kids are really looking forward to meeting you as helpers and friends, not as potential victims," he assured them and was rewarded with some relieved laughter from the education students. Don introduced the teachers, who each spoke for a few minutes about their particular approaches and their views of the children they teach. They conveyed singly and as a group their enthusiasm for adolescents and their positive outlook on teaching.

Gerry Bell focused upon teaching grade 7s, assuring the sceptical-looking education students, "It's a lot of fun to teach grade 7. They're young enough that you can still mold them but old enough that you can give them some responsibility." She categorized her teaching style as "halfway between traditional and crazy" and seemed to revel in talking about her own teaching practice. She noted that her multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning was like throwing a pebble into the water and creating ripples that extend outward in all directions.

Stuart Capstick provided a short history of his own teaching. When he moved to grade 7 the preceding year after fifteen years in elementary grades, he was "surprised to find them [the students] eager and excited." This year's class, though, was completely different: "The only rule is that there are no rules." While last year's group had been self-directed and Stuart could leave them to write fairly much on their own, he was finding this year's group more in need of a director. "I have a different group of children. They're all keen to work, but they work in a different way." Listening to Stuart's positive spin on this group, I couldn't help but hear the voices of many other teachers who would not have seen this difference as positively as Stuart presented it.

Florence Iftody also focused upon grade 7s, noting, "They _are_ little children and actually cute." I looked around to see how the education students received this view of grade 7s, which is not the "junior-high monsters" version that circulates more often in the university halls. Some looked slightly puzzled; others, like Sharon and Ruth, who have adolescents at home, smiled broadly. I made a note to remind myself to use this line about grade 7 students in my classes and see whether anyone would look even faintly convinced. I suspected it would only work when delivered by a junior high teacher in her school setting. Gerry spoke of the wide variety of abilities and personalities among the grade 7 children and the need to find out more about the children: "Some slow ones--do they have learning disabilities or do they just lack confidence?" One of her children, labelled "learning disabled," was doing fine with her writing assignments when playacting and personification activities preceded the writing.

Don began his discussion of his own teaching by noting, "I'm lucky; I get to teach all language arts." He distributed the McKernan school handbook and presented each student a copy of _The Write Stuff,_ the student anthology from last year. Don's obvious pride in presenting the anthology complemented his enthusiasm in talking about writing. He introduced a student poem from the anthology saying, "Another favourite writer of mine who writes reams . . . ." He spoke of beginning the year with poetry, finding that kids express themselves better in free verse than in prose, and he highlighted the difficulty of evaluating student poetry. With frequent references to Nancie Atwell, he spoke of his writers workshop and of the importance of bringing poets into the classroom. When he mentioned his requirement that students read six novels per term, several education students gave low "whoos" of surprise.

Following Don's comments, Naomi Mullins and Patricia Rijavec also spoke of their work with writers workshop. Naomi spoke of her efforts to initiate a workshop approach, which "may come as a surprise to Don." As Don responded quickly, "That's not a surprise," I wondered whether the education students had a sense of division between the elementary and junior high levels of teachers. I wondered whether it was common for these teachers to talk methods together or whether they followed the "usual" divisions. Naomi spoke of her class writing poetry and noted that "they are just beginning to get to a point where they can deal with grammar." Patricia agreed that her students were just beginning to cope with abstractions. She detailed her mid-year switch to a workshop approach after reading Atwell. "It's amazing what ten-year olds can write when they are given the chance!"

I was interested in the developmental perspective provided by these two elementary teachers. The image of the grade 7 child arriving newly-hatched on the junior high doorstep doesn't help a new secondary teacher to place the child into a context. Naomi and Patricia presented grades 5 and 6 children as capable, imaginative writers who are just beginning to be able to cope with the abstractions of grammar study.

Don opened the session for questions. The first was, "Who chooses the novels that the kids read?" Don answered, "The kids do. I give nudges, ask for parental suggestions and permission." General discussion of the question of good and bad choices of literature followed. Stuart noted that while one girl loved the suspense novels of V.C. Andrews, her friend gave up after three pages of one book. Some series are highly addictive, such as the "Babysitters' Club," which Stuart noted is "the same mush as Enid Blyton, but updated." Teachers noted that reading choices are very idiosyncratic, the same as for adults.

A final question was "What suggestions do you have for university course options?" The teachers responded variously, with Florence suggesting theatre options, Don mythology, and Patricia creative writing. She said, "I was inspired by my class last year to begin doing some creative writing."

Marg drew the session to a close by thanking the teachers, commenting enthusiastically upon their professionalism and their diversity of approaches to the required program of studies, also noting to students, "You'll have a strong contrastive base for later, when you student teach."

The Staff Room

In the first two years of the McKernan project, Marg and the education students had used the library as their home base, but in this third year they used the staff room. This room, which occupies a corner of the second floor of McKernan School, is a large L-shape with two walls of windows. A bright, cheerful place, it serves as lunchroom, relaxation area, work room, and reading area for the elementary and junior high teachers. To the left of the entrance area are kitchen facilities, counters, and cupboards. Along the windows are long tables and chairs where teachers eat lunch or grade papers. On the right side of the room is a wall of professional books and journals, along with a bulletin board of notices from the district and provincial education offices. Several comfortable chairs and a sofa are arranged in this area.

The normal operation of the staff room was disrupted not only by the presence of the education students, but also by the construction in progress, as workers fitted new windows here and throughout the school. Window coverings were not in place, so the Indian summer weather in September and early October occasionally made the room excessively bright and hot.

The addition of twenty-five new people to the staff room disrupted the usual flow of the teachers' use of the room, and for the first few days, we commonly saw looks of surprise and, occasionally, mild irritation on the faces of the McKernan teachers. As in most staff rooms, there were unspoken rules of territoriality in place at McKernan, perhaps inconsequential to outsiders but accepted without thought by the inhabitants. Elementary teachers sat at one table for lunch; junior high teachers sat at the other; French immersion teachers sat together speaking French. Suddenly, twenty-five extra bodies were in all the wrong seats, and junior high school teachers found themselves eating lunch at a table with elementary teachers. Teachers had to think about where they sat. Most teachers adjusted to the changes without comment.

Education students occasionally felt out of place or intrusive, but as their two-week stay proceeded, most became comfortable and used the staff room encounters as opportunities to speak with the language arts teachers about their work, about teaching, and about their students. Several of the teachers involved with the education students did not frequent the staff room, and students met with them in their classrooms. Conversations between education students and teachers who were not involved in the project with them, however, remained rare. Several education students spoke of trying "to keep out of the way, stay low-key and friendly, not pushy" with staff who were not involved with the project. That uncomfortable feeling may have had something to do with their own insecurity about their roles; Betty acknowledged this difficulty:

> . . . we were in the middle, we weren't student teachers, and it was an adjustment for me. Not to go in there and be thought of as a student teacher when

> all of the other schools I've been at, you are a student teacher.

Florence focused on the matter of "a room of one's own" when I asked her views on organizational matters for the education students. She strongly advocated that the education students be given a room to themselves for a homebase, stating, "The kids need someplace that's their own." I wondered about this, as I thought that there was much to be lost by segregating the education students. In the staff room, they were part of the life of the school; they had a sense of the flow of the school day and activity. By themselves in a room, I felt they would remain outsiders to the school and apart from the staff. Of course, a separate room would have the advantage of space in which to relax, to leave belongings, and to post notices.

By the second or third day of the education students' presence in the staff room, however, most people seemed to have adjusted well to the situation. The education students tended to congregate in one half of the large room, using the space for many purposes. The room provided a meeting place in which to organize their papers and schedules for the day and to arrange work sessions with others. They checked in with Marg and picked up copies of the daily bulletin. They checked on the time and place for class sessions in which Marg discussed such topics as unit planning or the readers theatre work. The daily twenty minutes of school-wide "USSR" time (uninterrupted, silent, sustained reading) could be spent comfortably here, with colleagues who were also available for discussion about one's reading.

More important than a check-in point for organizational matters, however, the staff room became a hub of learning for the education students. The room became the place where they explored ideas and worked through their experiences, in talk and in writing. As Marg was reliably found in the staff room, education students would wait until she was not speaking with someone, and engage her in conversation about their work, about their students. Sitting in a quiet corner, they reviewed their teaching plans, wrote in their journals, or worked on portfolio pieces; then they asked a fellow student, Marg, or me to have a conference about it. Afterwards, they often talked about the value of the conferences in terms of their writing and their work as language arts teachers who needed to learn how to talk with children about their writing. In between classes, they enjoyed their successes together or cheered each other up if things had not gone as they wanted. When they learned their practicum placements, they began to network with each other and with McKernan teachers for materials to prepare for their student teaching. They saw me as being available for talk, stopping by a table where I tried to keep up with field notes, to ask questions about their growing understanding of language arts teaching and learning: "How would you structure a writers workshop in a high school? What about diploma exams?" or "How can I get this kid in my sentence demon group involved?" or "I don't know what to say when I try to have a conference with a kid about a poem. Can you talk with me about my poem so I can get ideas?" As the two weeks progressed, the staff room became an increasingly vibrant and vital part of the McKernan experience for the education students. It was a safe haven in which professional questions occurred to them and they used the resources at hand (books, each other, school teachers, Marg, or me) to begin to explore possible answers.

CHAPTER 6

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND TEACHERS AT McKERNAN SCHOOL

After much anticipation and some trepidation, the education students met the groups and individuals with whom they would work. Though their work at McKernan School lasted only two weeks, the intensity of the involvement in the school made time behave peculiarly for some education students. Several times, individuals referred back to a conversation they had with me two days earlier as a conversation "a few weeks ago." Though their teaching schedule allowed much unscheduled time, the education students found their days full.

I have organized this chapter according to the various activities with classes and among the education students, beginning with the teaching of the "fables" unit. In this initial section, the writings of Annette and Arlene preview some of the dominant focuses of the education students as they began to teach their groups. In some respects the writers workshops were the most far-reaching aspect of the McKernan work for the class; I have left that section until late in the chapter to allow the reader to gain a sense of the prevailing atmosphere among class members before reading about their work with their own and their students' writing.

"Fables" Groups

The assignment

Gerry Bell, seeing herself as a resource person for the education students, and wanting them to experience "the whole gamut of the planning process," asked them to plan, teach, and evaluate a seven-period unit on fables. Gerry provided sample unit plans and materials, leaving the education students free to pick and choose among them or to find alternate materials of their own. Though Gerry was clearly attached to the fables unit as she taught it, the shortened unit length (reduced to seven from the ten class periods of the preceding year due to the YoWoChas trip) made that plan unworkable, so education students needed to structure a more manageable plan. They each selected several fables for their students to read, intending to lead them to a definition of fables through discussion of three or four to begin with. As the unit progressed, students would be asked to write their own fables, which would be evaluated by the education students.

The introduction

"Are these the university students? They look nice," I overheard on entering Gerry Bell's grade 7 class with the education students assigned to work on a "fables" unit. After calling the class to order and taking attendance, Gerry explained who the newcomers were, using the term "education students."

"Are they student teachers?" one student demanded in what seemed to be a slightly predatory tone. Gerry answered negatively and embellished on their roles as group leaders. The need to categorize struck even grade 7 students in September. I wondered whether the education students did better or worse by that particular student by not being student teachers.

Gerry divided the class into groups by lottery. She put slips of paper with numbers on them into two buckets, one for boys and one for girls to ensure co-ed groups. There was the expected suspense, as students cheered or groaned as their group memberships were decided. Then the class rearranged their seating to begin working.

Annette: ". . . did I ever learn a lot"

On her first day of teaching her "fables" group, Annette learned several lessons with her five students that most of us learn more publicly, in front of a class of thirty. She wrote about the experience in her journal:

> I taught one group of students in a very short time period--but did I ever learn a lot. I planned a general lesson in which the kids and I would read several fables and try to decide what similarities there were in order to come to a definition of a fable. However, I discovered that I should have thought about questions I would ask about the fables more carefully. The questions I did ask did not lead very effectively to an understanding of what a fable is.
>
> Also, I have a tendency, or rather, urge, to rush through content in order to complete what I planned to complete for the lesson. I am consciously trying to avoid doing this because it certainly does not benefit the students, nor does it make me a better teacher.
>
> Also, some of the vocabulary in certain fables was, and I loath admitting this, foreign to me. I forgot to look the words up, and as luck would have it, my inquiring students demanded a definition. We should have all looked up the words immediately, but instead I said that I would check the meaning later and get back to them. As a child, I was not interested in hearing the meanings of words hours after reading the story--I wanted to learn the meaning NOW. I'm sure other kids think the same way.

The remainder of Annette's journal entry for that day was an exclamation about how much she was learning about her group members. Despite the day's hard lessons in planning and organizing, she felt positive about her group and the fable work.

Arlene: A lesson in planning

I sat in with Arlene's group for a few minutes after they had started working the first day. As her group read aloud, she seemed more focused on management than content, directing "Now it's your turn to read, now it's yours," with little or no discussion or commentary between readers. The kids seemed offhand about the work, reading without expression and answering only when asked a question directly. Thinking that I was the problem in the group, I soon moved away.

As the week progressed, however, Arlene relaxed more and more with her group. She spoke of having been unhappy with the first session but was pleased with subsequent ones. She spoke of coming to relax with students and finding out "where they're coming from."

She also learned to read timetables with an eye to her planning, as she spoke of the disruption to her lesson plan when she realized that she had a double period. That forced her to change her plan: "They can't very well do a homework assignment between periods 5 and 6!"

From Arlene's portfolio: "That Skittish Day"

The following piece is taken from Arlene's writing portfolio. It shows, in Arlene's sense of humour, how she relaxed with her students over the course of the week. I couldn't help but feel that it also shows that she had indeed found out "where they're coming from."

> We were skittish that day. We were going on a retreat for the week and we certainly weren't in the mood for writing any old dumb fables. And anyway, this student teacher had a lot of nerve, putting us to work in the first place. Student teachers are supposed to be like a holiday. You're not supposed to do anything that looks like work and you're usually supposed to be able to get away with murder. Not this time though. This one was being pretty unreasonable. How can she expect us to want to write fake fables when exciting, real things were about to happen. That's what she did though. She wanted us to write. Of course, we had no intention of letting her get away with that and besides, we were skittish that day.
>
> So we fidgeted around and kicked each other under a table and made a big deal about getting out our notebooks and pens. We couldn't figure out why she wasn't yelling at us to get to work. She pulled out her own battered and padded brown notebook, opened it to a blank page, put her head down, and started writing. When she looked up and saw us all gawking at her, she just shrugged her shoulders and said that if

we get to sit and write for the next fifteen minutes, then she should be able to as well. "After all," she said, "I'm a writer and I enjoy writing." That seemed to make sense in a weird sort of way. No one wanted to stop her, we were just a little surprised was all. And she wasn't fooling around either. She meant business. By the time we had all settled down, she already had half a page.

There's something strange about having the teacher sitting next to you doing the same thing that you are. You know she's having the same kind of trouble and worries that you are. At least that's what it looks like. Things like, what am I going to write about, what kind of characters do I want to have, and does the comma go before or after the quotation marks? The best thing about it, though, is she's not always looking over your shoulder to see how much you have done and telling you to quit staring into space and get something on paper. We figured that if she was a writer and wasn't just someone who talked about writing and asked kids to write, she must know a little something about it. So we all wrote, even though we were a little skittish that day.

We wrote for fifteen minutes, just like she said and then she wondered if any of us would like to share what we wrote with the rest of the group. None of us really wanted to do that. There's too big a chance that someone will laugh at you. She said we didn't have to if we really didn't want to but she would really like to hear what we thought of her fable. Well, that was the biggest surprise. Not only did she write with us, she wanted us to hear what we thought of what she had written. She read it out loud and it was pretty good. In some parts we couldn't understand who was doing the talking and we told her. She didn't get mad or laugh or anything. She just thanked us and said she'd work on that for next time. That made us feel a little better and we all read our fables to the group. She didn't let anybody say anything until whoever was reading was finished. She said that if you talk or draw or look around while someone else is reading or talking, it made it look like you didn't care and none of us wanted anyone to do that to us so we tried not to do it to anyone else.

Like I said, it was kind of weird to see the teacher writing with us but it was good too for a couple of reasons. It made us think that maybe writing might not have to be just a chore that you do for marks because the teacher says you have to. She didn't have to write a fable with us, but she did all the same. Hard as it may be to believe, it actually looked like she was enjoying herself. The other thing was that by

> reading us her fable, it helped us see some things about fables that we didn't know before and we'll probably change some of the stuff we've written.
>
> But for now we all have a good start on these fables because we sat and wrote for fifteen minutes even though we were skittish that day.

As Arlene demonstrates so vividly, she was learning to see things from her students' perspectives. As she and Annette focused upon their students, the underlying lessons they were learning about planning and organizing for these students were lessons that the other education students were also learning with their groups and classes.

"Sentence Demons" Groups

The assignment

The assignment for Don Garry's grade 8 students was to work in groups of four or five, with a "university partner" acting as a resource person and group leader. Each group would be responsible for explaining their particular sentence demon to the class in an imaginative and clear way. Role playing, songs, costumes, and audio-visual aids were among the suggestions given for making the explanations interesting. The group would make a poster to accompany the presentation, to define and give examples of the correct use of the demon. An exercise sheet consisting of a definition, examples, and ten exercise sentences would be distributed for class practice. Each group would also list five questions involving sentence reconstruction to be included on an exam which the entire class would take after the presentations. Marks were to be awarded as follows:

Careful definition of subject	15
Concrete examples and explanations. . .	15
Appropriate class exercise questions. .	10
Carefully constructed exam questions. .	10
Creativity and originality in	
a. presentation . .	25
b. poster.	25

Eighteen education students were assigned to one of the grade 8 classes for work with sentence demons. They prepared for the assignment by using the student text to clear up any doubts about correct usage of their particular demon if necessary. The grade 8 classes began meeting period 1 of the education students' first day at McKernan. Education students not assigned to the period 1 class waited for the period 1 group leaders to return to the staff room, eager to get the first reports before leaving for their own class. The period 1 group leaders returned chatting and excited. Marlaine exclaimed, "The time goes so fast!" She was impressed with the questions her kids had asked about their demon, "sentence fragments," questions that were "real and relevant." The period 2 group filed out looking somewhat reassured.

Jill: Participant role

I joined the 8B class for their first session with the education students. Don introduced them as "university partners" and "group leaders," to be used as resource people by his students. They introduced themselves to the class, some saying only their names, looking too shy to say more. Anya, after giving her name, added that she is from British Columbia and loves travel; this earned an "all right!" from one student. Don handed out and explained an assignment sheet with all requirements and procedures spelled out in detail, emphasizing creativity and the need to make good use of resources. Naturally, several students groaned at the mention of a poster requirement. Don maintained a disciplined class atmosphere through his explanations, doing a "teacher stare" whenever anyone talked or rustled. Students needed no more than the stare to quieten them. Don assigned the groups and stepped back to let the process begin.

Don's announcement of group membership was very different from the group selections in Gerry's "fables" groups, where Gerry had pulled names from two buckets. Nothing random about these groups--Don had the names already written on a paper and simply read them off matter-of-factly, with no explanation for his selections. Both ways seem useful at times, and I thought the education students would do well to see both ways in action.

With one education student, Curt, absent, I became the surrogate university partner for him, a chance to be the participant as well as the observer. Though these distinctions seem important for the researcher in thinking and being in the group, they are irrelevant, I'm sure, to anyone connected with the real operation of the school. "Are you here? Can you do this?" are the relevant questions, not "Does your role permit you to participate in this manner?" Such niceties do not keep a school humming. "Participant-observer," indeed!

Niceties aside, however, I did not want to shape Curt's group too much and deprive him of the chance to work through the structure and dynamics of his group. The group consisted of two boys and three girls, all of whom were eager to talk, especially after learning that I was not their "real" group leader. Their talkativeness seemed to me to be a certain amount of gamesmanship--talking is better than working, so let's keep it up. But that was all right with me, as it meant that I could teach them the sentence demon and ask them to think about how to structure their presentation without coming to any closure on it. We all had to strike the balance between "friendly" and "business-like" with the groups. Ahmed in particular was talkative, a child who seemed very bright and in need of some challenging work. He talked about his love of magic; I wondered whether the group would work his talent into their presentation.

As the class left at the end of the period, I overheard one student to another, "This is going to be fun." The education students were amazed at how quickly the twenty minutes of groupwork passed: "That seemed like about seven minutes!"

It became clear gradually to me and, of course, to the education students, that Don's division of the groups had been quite canny. Only three weeks into the school year, he knew his students well enough to group them strategically. Each group included a "difficult" student who generally resisted the leader in one way or another, a "keener" who would attempt to leap tall buildings if the leader suggested it, and three more or less "average" kids who would follow along politely and conscientiously. When later confronted with his "plot," Don agreed that his intent had been to make each group a fair cross-section of a typical class. He spoke of the benefits to both groups of students: his students could learn to work in groups with a group leader, and the education students could learn how to teach kids to work together in groups. He noted that productive groups do not occur spontaneously--we all need to learn to organize them and work in them.

Sharon and Laurie and "parallelism"

Sharon returned to the staff room after her first session with her "sentence demons" group a bit taken aback by the students and by her particular demon, "parallelism." She found one student especially disruptive, which she dealt with by "setting plenty of ground rules." In talking about what seemed to have gone wrong, she noted that the exercises in the book were too difficult, exclaiming, "I couldn't have answered the first question in the book!" The group members wound up confused, which led Sharon to plan her own handout of exercises for the group to use.

On Tuesday morning, Sharon and I talked about the handout and about the problems in class the preceding day. As we looked at her handout, we were able to sort out some difficulties, as well as addressing the questions of grammar terminology and structuring examples. She had started with a noun-adjective example, "He was funny, intelligent, and a swimmer," which I pointed out was more difficult as a teaching example than a sentence with obvious markers, such as "-ed," "-ing," or the infinitive "to." I suggested she begin with a sentence with obvious markers and ask her students to add phrases to the sentences. To emphasize the importance of consistency, I suggested she use the same sentence with different markers. For example, "When he goes to the ocean, John likes to swim, to fish, and to listen to the sound of the waves" and "When he goes to the ocean, John likes swimming, fishing, and listening to the sound of the waves." We talked about the need to think fast to make up examples that are appropriate for the students and that answer questions as they arise. Sharon thanked me for talking with her. In talking, I realized why I always use the blackboard to teach points of grammar--by doing the relatively slow writing that a blackboard demands, I get the extra few seconds of concentration necessary to find useful examples.

As the week progressed, Sharon continued to struggle with her group; the dynamics were difficult, as she had several students who couldn't work together without belittling each other and generally letting their personal friction destroy Sharon's attempts at getting the project going. The pivot of the group was Laurie, the "disruptive" student of the first session. Sharon's "ground rules" had little impact on Laurie, leaving Sharon puzzled. In the second session, however, when she distributed her handout to the group, Sharon found that Laurie did the hardest examples easily and was bored by the rest. The "discipline problem" was in fact the quickest student in the group. Sharon noted later that Laurie was "bored with too-easy work, contemptuous of others who aren't as quick, and she looks for trouble to entertain herself." As Sharon decided to assign Laurie to make the poster to make her more task-oriented, I predicted that the image of Laurie would follow Sharon into all of her classrooms, making her question the reasons for a student's inattentiveness.

The group dynamics continued to be an issue, with three of the students working well together, and Laurie and another student unwilling to tolerate the others. Sharon was reminded of herself in the three "good workers":

> Three of the kids are mirror images of myself as a junior high kid, which I find incredible. They're obedient and do as they are told. They're interested in what the teacher is saying. They want to please you. And two of the kids couldn't be more indifferent if they tried. They've got spunk and courage, so I find it fascinating. . . . I'm enjoying it amazingly. I find three of them will go off in the corner and do things, work on their own. The other two of them are making me come up with ways to manage things that I ordinarily wouldn't have thought of. The only danger I think of that, is that I think I'm dwelling too much, giving attention to the two, when the other three need my attention, too.

Sharon allowed Laurie and Jordan, who were unwilling to work with the others, to do their own poster, so Sharon's group became two subgroups. As Sharon reached a crisis point in worrying about taking too much time with the disruptive two, they settled down into a reasonable amount of group harmony. A girl from the ostracized group of three worked with Laurie and Jordan on the day when her group members were absent. Sharon saw this as the first day that Laurie and Jordan would let the other girl speak without belittling her.

Sharon continued to struggle with the management of the group. She let herself get talked into a situation she later regretted:

> One thing I did that I don't think I'd do again. Michael [one of the other education students] brought gum for his kids, so Jordan said, "How come you don't bring us gum?" So I said, "OK, I'll bring some tomorrow." They asked for bubble gum. . . . That was the day two were absent, so I brought some the next day for them. [Problems ensued, as the bubble-blowing got out of hand.] . . . I didn't think that one through. When Jordan asked, I should have said, "I don't bring gum," but I said OK. The first two days I was scrambling to keep on top of it. I was grasping at ways to keep them contained, so when someone said "Bring gum," I said OK. . . . It wasn't a disaster. But it got out of hand. Maybe I showed Jordan I had feelings. I would be taken advantage of once, but not over a long period of time. I know how to put my foot down as a mother. . . . It was [Michael's] idea, and I probably shouldn't have copied. And not listened to Jordan when he was calling the shots, because that's what he did.

After Laurie and Jordan arrived unprepared and with rather feeble excuses for two days, Sharon checked with Don Garry for advice. He wanted the students to be accountable for the work, so Sharon agreed that if the students were again unprepared, she would require them to finish the poster after school. The confrontation was avoided, because Laurie and Jordan arrived with a poster completed. Sharon was impressed by the idea for this poster, seeing it as more creative than the poster of the students who had worked diligently:

> The idea is good, probably one of the more creative ideas in the class. But the poster is a mess! It's a mess; "parallelism" is spelled wrong, and it was right on the sheet. . . . The idea is slot machines; they call it "cherry, cherry, pear." It's terrific. I'm amazed that they can work together. The other three [students] have worked hard, and theirs is a good poster, but it's not really creative. And these other two, it's a mess but it's really creative.

Whose 'Demon' is this, anyway?

After school the first day of "sentence demon" groups, Barbara was disappointed about her group's work that morning. She was discouraged at the lack of response of the students in her group and said that several other education students felt the same about their groups. I tried to put the situation in a positive light, saying that the education students had time to prepare and were excited about starting their work, while the McKernan students arrived in the usual Monday morning state, still focused on their weekend rather than on school. "Tomorrow will be better, as the kids get to know you and have a sense of who you are and what work they are doing," I assured her. I hoped that was true.

The following morning in the staff room, several people echoed Barbara's disappointment at the lack of enthusiasm of their groups for sentence demons. Sharon, Michael, Barbara, and Joanne all moaned about their groups' apathy and claimed that only Marlaine's group had been lively. I repeated my pat piece, which sounded slightly feeble on a second run-through, but they seemed cheered. They left the staffroom with a pep-rally cheer. After ten minutes, I went into the classroom to find the room humming with the sounds of productive talk.

Later, Sharon, Marlaine, and Rebecca talked in the staffroom about their groups. Marlaine and Sharon were concerned about time pressure; they thought their groups were stalling to get the university partner to do the work. I suggested there might be a power struggle, as the students tried to find out how much they can "get" the university students to do. Marlaine planned to give definite deadlines: plan and do the poster one day, finish it and plan the presentation the next day, and finish and rehearse the presentation the following day. She and Sharon felt they were the only ones in their groups who felt the time pressure, and they were determined not to be tricked into taking complete responsibility for the work. Betty joined the group to worry about the amount of responsibility she should take for the quality of her group's work. Several others agreed. The question was, "Am I being evaluated for their performance?"

This question of ownership may have been more explicit than normal in these small groups where the education student was not "teacher," and the grade 8 students needed to figure out what role the "university partner" would take. But the issues of power, ownership, and roles are important concerns for teachers who work in more individual ways with students. If the education students can spot the gamesmanship in their small groups, perhaps it will help them to spot the same issue later when their students say, "Teacher, can you suggest a topic? I don't have anything to write about." As the school children used their conscious or unconscious wiles to determine the boundaries of the roles of these "university partners," so the education students puzzled out the boundaries of their roles for themselves. As student teachers, they are most definitely evaluated for their performances in teaching. This experience at McKernan, organized to eliminate evaluations for their "performances" with children, still posed a dilemma for them as they worried about whether they would look bad if their groups didn't "perform" well. This group, as they talked through the issue, seemed increasingly comfortable with the idea that they would guide their groups as much as possible but not accept the ultimate responsibility for a group which did not do the work. Nevertheless, the issue is one to be confronted, with no simple answers.

Kate: "Capitalizing on each individual's strength"

Kate talked about working with her "sentence demon" group, who had the demon of "misplaced and dangling modifiers" to teach to the class. She found that the group pulled together well by "capitaliz[ing] on each individual's strength." She spoke of one girl who couldn't concentrate on the exercises; this girl worked instead with another girl on the poster. Two other students enjoyed creative writing, so they wrote the skit. Kate and a boy "like to do technical things, so we reworked the sentences that the group had done to make sure that they all had the 'right' errors in them." After the initial work was completed for each part of the project, the group members changed positions to check and improve upon the work. The ones who had done the skit put the final touches on the poster; the boy who had worked on the technical aspects of the exercises made suggestions to liven up the skit script. Kate focused her attention on the group's interactions and her growing comfort with her students:

> We capitalized on everybody's strong points, I'm really pleased with it. One of my portfolio pieces is actually my five-day diary of working with Don's group, nothing else. At night I found I was going home and writing notes about getting more familiar with the students in my group, them gaining familiarity with dangling modifiers, and misplaced modifiers, when it really fell together. . . . I want to say the day that I felt comfortable punching Suresh on the arm and saying "get back to work," just joking with him. . . [felt great].

Ruth: "They were all excited about what was happening"

Ruth, who presents a calm, almost placid appearance, with a voice so gentle and quiet that a listener has to lean in to hear her, bubbled with enthusiasm when talking about her work with her sentence-demon group. She focused upon her enjoyment of her students and getting to know them as individuals. Her daughter was thirteen, so Ruth's discussion of the McKernan students was laced with exclamations about their similarities to her daughter. She also found the group's excitement infectious:

> Right from the first minute, they were excited. They had so many ideas. The first day I felt almost like, it sort of scared me. Because they had so many ideas, that I didn't know how to focus it. I thought, "Oh my

> God, the period is almost gone and all they have is ideas. We really don't have it centred on anything yet. . . . I got home and told my husband about it, and he said, "Wow, that sounds great, all you have to do is kind of move them in the direction then, and work on their enthusiasm." It sort of scared me and made me think, well, maybe I have to go back to the old way, of, you know, make them do some sheets on parallelism or something, to focus them.
>
> But I didn't need to do anything. . . . The next day they came back, and they seemed to know what parallelism was, because we went through a whole bunch of sentences and they seemed to be more focused on what they were going to do. I was thrilled after that next class. I actually felt silly because I got so excited when they really did focus in without me making them.

As she spoke about this energy channelling itself without her intervention, it also became clear that she did make some decisions which may have influenced the positive tone in her group. One of the students returned to class the second day without having done the homework sentences. As Ruth related the story, I noticed that she had made a decision not to consider this a problem, despite her uneasiness about him the preceding day:

> The first day I thought, "Oh, I'm going to have a lot of trouble with this Danny because he seems like he's kind of half sneering at me and he's slightly bored, and seems like he could be Mr. Cool of the group." I knew that he would be the only one who wouldn't do [the homework]. And he was the only one who didn't do it. But that second day when we came in . . . and everybody else had their stuff done, he said, "Oh, I'll take all this stuff home and do it up on my computer. And I'll do twice as many questions tonight, since I didn't do any last night." . . . He did up the whole thing, and it looks totally professional, better than I could have done with my typewriter.

Ruth's response had been typically low-key when Danny didn't have the homework:

> I said, "Oh, you didn't do it. Oh, that's too bad," and then I just went on to everybody else. And he saw that everybody else did it. What I did was, I had them construct incorrect parallel sentences, and then we're going to read them in class, and I wanted them to have a key to what was wrong. . . . Each person read their

> own and everybody else figured it out, and it turned out to be fun instead of what he maybe thought it might be. . . . I tend to believe that it didn't have anything to do with me. I think the group was just up and going, and he got into it. It would have been impossible not to be excited. They were all excited about what was happening. Like I say, I think I lucked out and got a really good group for one thing.

When I asked Ruth whether she had done anything to encourage the enthusiasm, she attributed it to her inclination not to intervene and manage, as well as to the group's natural exuberance:

> Well, the only thing that I did to encourage it--I know that there were points right in that first day where I could have said, "Well, let's talk about what is parallelism. I had little points where I could have made decisions about things. But instead of making decisions, I just really wanted to get in and do and have them do. . . . So I guess if I had anything, anything that maybe got them going, it was that I just let them. I didn't try to stop them because it was always really there. And I was excited. So you know how people seem to feel each other's excitement? I like kids and I liked them. They seemed so hyper and quick. I heard in some of the other classes, some of the people did have problems where the kids just didn't have ideas and my kids just happened to have a lot. Like in my art class that I taught, I noticed that the best way to teach was just to get out there and just give this quick, you know like the mini-lessons in Atwell, five minutes, pack it full of stuff that might inspire people, and if you get a few clicks here and there, then they'll get to work and what they want to do is [keep going]. . . . So I really think I got a lucky group. But they responded to that really well, to let them take off.

Ruth detailed the performance that the group planned to do. While she was not entirely confident that they were ready to perform, she was proud of their idea of a game show parody:

> They're doing a game show. They thought it all up by themselves and what they are doing is, Mark Barker, he's a game show host. Mercedes Black is the Vanna White-type character. We have three contestants. It's about faulty parallelism. So the host comes out and reads examples of faulty parallelism and the contestants have to correct it. Mercedes Black stands

> behind the contestants and holds up a big sign that has the incorrect sentence and then when he asks for the correct one, she turns it over and there's the corrected version. So the whole class can see it. The first guy gets it wrong; he thinks up something totally ridiculous The second one makes up something ridiculous, and the third one gets it right. Because the definition for parallelism is a little [hard], the host is going to come out and define it first. But kids don't really relate to definitions. And neither do I, really, but when you hear it and you see it, then the other kids might catch on, too, and so that's what they're hoping is going to happen. . . . They did a really neat poster, and they got involved in that, they made up all of the sentences to reconstruct. So, they seem to know their parallelism now.

Performance! Robin's "Sentence Fragment Demon"

Chaos was in session as I entered the classroom. Students who were about to perform waved extremities to get their questions noticed, while students not scheduled to perform caught the general excitement. Robin quietly coached her "sentence fragment" group with last-minute instructions as Don Garry called the class to order and explained the marking again. The apparent scheduling conflict with Florence's period 3 class that had worried the education students turned out to be an illusion, so all university partners were able to be present. Who was more keyed up, the kids in the skits or the university partners?

The skit was performed first. In it, three kids came to visit their friend, and they settled down to watch "The Guiding Light" on television. Robin, crouching under the table, operated the tape recorder for "Guiding Light" theme music and sound effects. She had a problem getting this cued right, which distracted the group. The "on-stage" phone rang; answering it, a boy knocked over a vase, exclaiming in mock horror, "Oh, no, my priceless antique!" The "Sentence Fragment Genie" appeared from the vase offering to answer questions. "I wish I knew what a sentence fragment is," the boy responded. The "Genie" explained. End of skit. The group handed out their exercise sheet.

The skit ended at 9:50, and the class was told they would have until 10:15 to do the exercise sheet. The students knew they had ample time, and they seemed prepared to stall for more. In ten minutes, the room was pretty noisy. Don Garry called for quiet and asked the group to begin the poster presentation.

The group held up their poster, which showed a train with tracks splitting in two directions, for sentences and fragments. Students noted whether exercise phrases were sentences or fragments as group members indicated correct answers. In part two, students were required to make the fragments into complete sentences. As group members called for volunteers to correct the fragments, they also asked for the correct punctuation. As this was happening, Robin coached from the sidelines. Don prompted for multiple examples and corrected a punctuation misunderstanding. The punctuation became a bit of a red herring, as a student had a complete sentence judged wrong because of the punctuation.

The arrangement was that two of the education students evaluated each skit. When the skit ended, Robin asked for verbal assessments from the two education students who were marking this group. Amanda and Christine made positive comments. Don's students joined in when invited and got right to the heart of the matter--the poster was not explained well. Group members re-explained it, doing a better job this time but included a punctuation error which the class picked up. Don straightened this out, then invited the group to assess their own performance. They echoed the first speaker in saying they were "nervous about screwing up [their] lines" and were thrown off when the tape recorder didn't go well. Robin wrapped up with praise for her group, taking responsibility for the tape problem and her misunderstanding of the commas in the punctuation error.

"So I guess we all learned something today," she finished cheerfully. Her comments rounded off the session and put it into a positive perspective. Knowing Robin to be a perfectionist, however, I doubted that she felt as cheerful as she sounded.

Sure enough, the following day Robin appeared beside me with a xeroxed page from a grammar handbook and asked if we could talk about the punctuation problem in her group's performance. She was bothered about Don's instruction not to use a comma before "because" in mid-sentence. She was not differentiating between "because" followed by a clause and "because" followed by a phrase. The class example was "Don't go out because of the storm," in which Don correctly took out the comma that the students had inserted. In talking about the difference between that sentence and "Don't go out, because there is a storm," which may correctly have a comma inserted, we talked about the problem of grammar terminology: how much is needed? how much is too much? She talked about the differences between herself and her boyfriend, who is also an avid reader but who does not have much explicit grammar knowledge. I suggested that she try to discover more about his tacit knowledge of language; studying his language usage and understanding might help her to develop her ideas about the value of explicit knowledge of language.

Performance and the "demon" of evaluation

With Don Garry absent, his 8A class took some advantage of the substitute. The noise level was elevated, the attention span depressed. Nevertheless, Dave's group was up at bat for their sentence demon. The students didn't really teach the material and went almost immediately into the exercises, so the class lost focus after a few minutes. I thought Dave looked angry while the class did the exercises and wondered whether the class rowdiness upset him. Amanda then stepped in as class leader, calm, poised, and in control. She ran the discussion after the class finished doing the exercises.

Later, Christine and Robin told me that they showed Dave their evaluations immediately after his group performed their skit. They felt that Dave was annoyed at his group's 93, compared to Robin's group's 95 from the preceding period. They were offended that he might be upset at this. I suggested they explain to him where and why points were deducted. This explanation would not be difficult, as the group had not provided examples as per the assignment sheet. Again, the demon of evaluation reared its head. If Dave was offended at the grade, he was taking responsibility for his group's work and seeing evaluation of his performance where none was intended. I wondered whether this feeling was more pervasive than most of the education students would admit.

Anya: Getting to know the students

Anya wrote a portfolio piece detailing her work with her "sentence demon" group, which she termed her "best teaching experience thus far." She felt some trepidation initially about the time constraints and about the five students in her group. In her writing, Anya focused upon the personalities and working styles of the students in her group; she recognized that Don Garry had chosen the groups carefully to include motivated and unmotivated students.

She spent her first day discovering ways in which her students could work productively. One student was quite insecure and needed much reassurance; another, though unmotivated, would work on specific tasks when asked; a third was quite quick and full of ideas but disorganized, so an organized student took over the detail work; the fifth student followed the lead of the organized student. Having observed the students to understand how they might work productively, Anya was pleased with her group's cohesion:

> Each one of the students in my group surprised me. All of them eventually started to find an area they wanted to work at. This showed me that getting to know the students is an important part of helping students learn. I felt more like a facilitator in the group and not a captain. I tried to keep a low profile and I think it worked. They really did not need me to tell them how to do their activities. . . . I probably learned more from them than they learned from me.

Betty: The ultimate responsibility for the project

While many of the university partners spoke or wrote of the excitement of learning how to forge a group spirit with five very different adolescents, Betty did not experience that feeling of success with her "sentence demon" group. She wrote of her disappointment with her group's lack of responsibility for their work and the presentation. She never seemed to be able to foster a cohesive working group.

She began the group work "with butterflies in my stomach" and wondered why her group members did not look as excited as she was about the project. In a writing portfolio commentary about the first session, she focused upon her first impressions of the students, lamenting,

> Why did I get the girl with the severe attitude problem? The way she sits in her chair--that distinctive slouch--tells me she is not impressed with this project. The ripped jeans, the thick black eyeliner and the way she speaks to the others in the group tell me many things about her. She will be difficult to work with, and will she do any work at all? She gives no suggestions or comments to help the group in our planning the presentation. I try to persuade her, but the response is a cold, blank look.

In talking in the staff room, Betty focused upon the pressure she felt to take responsibility for the group work and her refusal to accept that burden. She never managed to persuade the students to accept it either. In her writing about the group failure, however, she did not try to evaluate the effectiveness of her efforts to bring them together; she vented her frustration:

> I feel frustrated and pushed, but I keep telling myself it's not my project. The group does not show me the same thing. Relaxation. They are not worried, but I feel they should be. I assign the finishing up activities just as I have assigned everything else.

Her account of the group's presentation focused upon what went wrong and on her refusal to step in to rescue the students. Another piece of Betty's writing is a dialogue between a "university me" and a "McKernan me" about the possibilities and values of such a group project. The two selves discuss the nature of the assignment, the time allotted, the environment created, and the potential for student learning. The two do not, however, reconcile their views, and the dialogue ends abruptly with no conclusion or direction for future work. It gives the impression that the writer, though trying to sort out this negative experience for herself, was at that time unable to do so.

The issue of teacher versus student ownership of work, which Betty was unable to resolve successfully with her group, was a common thread among the "sentence demon" groups as education students worked to make the dynamics of their groups positive. When they could find a way to build a team spirit as Ruth and Anya did or at least a peaceful co-existence as Sharon finally did, ownership was not a problem. As the education students were not required to plan the "sentence demon" project, they focused primarily upon group dynamics and content. In their work on "appearance and reality," however, the challenge for them was the planning process.

"Appearance and Reality" Groups

The assignment

Eleven education students were assigned to work with students in Florence Iftody's three grade 9 classes. Six education students would teach their mini-unit in two classes, and the remaining five would teach the mini-unit in one class. Repeating the assignment from the previous year, Florence wanted the education students to work with a group of four or five grade 9 students on a thematic mini-unit, to be designed by the education students working in groups or individually. In setting out her requirements, Florence left open the choice of theme, saying that the education students could choose their own, but also mentioning that "appearance and reality" might work well, as her students had already read one story and talked a bit about this theme. The education students latched onto that idea without discussing other possible themes much, whether from genuine desire or from an assumption that Florence "really" wanted them to choose it, I could not tell. Perhaps it was simple expediency, as they faced the task of planning the mini-unit with some trepidation.

Florence wanted the education students' mini-units to include some work with literature and some tangible "product," which would be used for room displays. She stressed that in September she makes a determined effort to fill the room and the bulletin boards outside her room with her students' work. During our two weeks at McKernan, Florence's efforts to display her students' work impressed the education students, and the results were attractive, lively, tangible evidence of her infectious pride in her students' writing and art work. [Later, some education students were appalled to enter bare-walled schools for their practicum placements, recalling the colourful displays at McKernan and the powerful message they conveyed about the value of the individual students and their work.]

In terms of the content of the mini-unit, unlike in the "sentence demon" work with Don's class, the education students had much freedom of choice. The six people who were going to teach the mini-unit in two classes opted to plan together and agreed to meet to discuss ideas; the remaining five decided to plan individually.

Planning problems: Appearance or reality?

Day one

Christine, Robin, Ruth, Dave, Amanda, and Kate met to plan their "appearance and reality" mini-unit. From the beginning, they seemed all at loose ends, swinging back and forth wildly between their attempt to grasp the theme of "appearance and reality" and their attempt to satisfy the "product orientation" of a tangible display. For more than two hours, ideas bounced and careered from one to another, as each group member jostled for position of his or her ideas. They had ideas for displays and activities before they had a sense of what they wanted to teach about the theme. They wanted, in the one week of teaching this mini-unit, to have their students "do" a poem, short story, collage, and a skit, all produced without benefit of any study about the theme!

In my not-very-pristine role of participant-observer, I sat in on the first planning session and taped much of the meeting. After sitting placidly through their initial confusion, which I felt was typical of the brainstorming most people would do to approach a topic, I began to feel uncomfortable as the second hour slipped away with no resolution or coherence in sight. I wrestled with my definition of my role: these people needed guidance, or at least some reminder about basic limitations of time and energy (theirs and their students'). But while feeling guilty for not intervening, I also was fascinated by the unfolding of their process. They were six very different people, who clearly approached their work in different ways, and I wanted to stay in the background to see if or how they could pull together. Mostly, I tried not to be directive but did provide some directions when asked. For example, at one point I noted that their view of the theme seemed to be entirely negative, that the reality was always negative beneath a smooth or positive-seeming surface. I suggested they might consider various aspects of the theme instead of just one. Later when they mulled over ideas for stories, I suggested that they might have a look in the grade 9 literature book that Florence had referred to.

They responded positively to my suggestions and continued to grapple with the theme and, I thought, with each other's planning styles. The frustration level rose until, after more than two hours, Kate stood up and said, "I love you all dearly, but I need to take a walk." The six agreed, with relief, to go their separate ways to look into ideas, check some resources that night, and meet again the next day. Feeling that the confusion and clashing styles of the session had probably been necessary, I nevertheless thought that more of the same would be disastrous, so afterwards I told Marg about their planning session. I felt that I had maintained a reasonably distant observer role for the session but also felt that a person in the "teacher" role would be needed if they could not come to some agreement in the next session.

Day two

The following day, without mentioning our discussion, Marg sat in as group members brought their ideas from their work of the preceding evening. Each person had certainly worked the night before, with very individual results: Kate wrote, first a two-page freewrite on her understanding of "appearance and reality," and then several concrete poems on the theme. She was enthusiastic about using concrete poetry to approach the theme. Ruth visited two libraries, spoke with the librarians, did some research, and had several ideas. Amanda had looked through the literature book and was enthusiastic about the story "On the Sidewalk, Bleeding," about a boy who was stabbed and died a needless death because he was wearing a jacket associated with a particular gang. On reading the story, the other group members also focused enthusiastically on it.

Dave advocated a more focused version of his idea of the preceding day for an introductory activity for the theme, and other group members had looked at home for useful props for the activity. Each group leader would produce a paper bag with several unusual objects in it. Students would be asked to identify the objects, but would probably mistake most of them as they would actually be used for different purposes than they appeared. For example, Christine had a set of baker's tools which she assumed most students would identify as common household tools such as screwdrivers. Ruth had a set of jeweller's tools which also looked interesting and a little mysterious. In this manner, they wanted to introduce the idea that things often appear different than they are.

With this additional work, the group's ideas were more focused for possible activities but remained unfocused concerning their overall objectives for the mini-unit. Their inclination was to accept each person's ideas for activities without having a sense of the time needed to accomplish the activities, much less to pull them together into a coherent unit. Each possible choice in the structuring of activities was endlessly discussed without decisions actually being made.

Marg began the session by remaining taciturn, asking an occasional question to help the group clarify their intentions. As the session proceeded, her questions became more specific, focusing upon the objectives behind the activities, the teaching, and the specifics of organizing the activities.

The group decided to have their students read "On the Sidewalk, Bleeding" but were divided as to the way they wanted to handle the reading. Robin was uncertain how she preferred to have the story read and wanted to consider possibilities:

> **Robin:** If one person just reads it out and the rest were following, . . . then, OK, time-wise that would be good because then the slow readers would be right up there with the quick readers, so then we could just get into the discussion of the story. But then, . . . what was your point about silent reading?
> **Dave:** I just thought that when people are reading to you, it's like television, . . . you kind of turn off your brain. . . . I just don't think that story, with this kid dying on the street--I don't think that kind of story would be good read aloud; it's something that you can get into better on your own.

Marg intervened at this point to suggest that they "might agree to disagree" by having some groups do an oral reading and some groups do silent reading of the text. Then afterwards students could talk about what difference it made. Robin worried that the oral readers would distract the silent ones, and Marg noted that they would need to book the library for the silent readers if both oral and silent readings were allowed. The group backed away from the notion of two methods of reading occurring simultaneously and again attempted to decide on one method, with Robin wavering between oral in groups, oral as a class, and silent reading. Kate was in favour of oral reading, and the group again seemed boggled. After more circular discussion, Marg stepped in to pull the group back to a broader picture:

> **Marg:** What are you going to do with this story?
> **Amanda:** We haven't thought about that yet.
> **Marg:** It's an important question because the method that you may choose might be more appropriate for some activities. For example, if you want kids to be able to go back to the story and find things, then they have to have the print in front of them. If you read it aloud to them and they don't have the print in front of them, they can't find things in the story again. So, perhaps once you've decided what kind of activity you are going to do with the kids, it will suggest to you which of those methods that you appear to be stuck on is more appropriate, because otherwise, you are just

> going to grab at a method of reading to come to some closure on that.

The decision was finally reached to have the education students do an oral reading, followed by discussion of the story in groups with the education students as group leaders. I was interested in the group's interaction with Marg; they certainly welcomed her advice, knowing that they needed help to structure a worthwhile unit. But they also felt free to reject the advice when it seemed too much for them to handle, as with the double methods for reading. Ironically, Marg had offered them a way to structure to allow them to read the story as the disagreeing individuals wished, but they preferred to forfeit their own choice in favour of a single option.

The planning group then considered their discussion of the story and were divided about whether or not to pre-plan questions. Robin was adamant in her refusal to discuss the story without benefit of planned questions to use at least as a back-up in case the unstructured discussion fizzled, and the others soon agreed. They wanted to include discussion of critical aspects of the story, in particular the symbolism of the gang jacket, as well as personal response, but were uncertain whether to begin with a critical or personal discussion. Marg spoke up:

> You've suggested that you could talk about the story and then move out into their lives. Would it be useful to do it in the other order, with grade 9s, to talk about their lives and then move into the story? My experience is that they'll manipulate your questions around to talk about their lives and how this is true and what they've seen. If you could set it up so that they could listen to the text first, and, remember, you'll have to set a context for that reading. It could be as simple as "Yesterday, we were talking about . . . and today we'll read a story about . . . ."

As the decision making bogged down again and again with the group members still unable to consider their overall objectives, Marg reminded them to decide upon their broader objectives, with her comments becoming increasingly explicit. As the group stalled over the day three activities, Marg spelled out their problem:

> Do you see your dilemma? Because you don't know exactly what you want to do, you're grabbing at "here's an activity, here's an activity, this might take this long." Partly that's inexperience--you get a better sense of how long things take with experience. But that's OK, because Florence's giving you her class to help you learn how to do some of these things. So that part's positive. But on the other hand, because you don't know what your kids are going to do, except maybe some visual thing, you can't see even how the days work. So you've got a real parts and whole problem in the sense that you're trying to attack it through the parts, and you can't even decide what parts fit where.

Working through all of the decisions that must be made in planning a unit of any length, the group with Marg gradually shaped the "appearance and reality" unit. Group members began to consider more of the pedagogical aspects of the unit, as, for example, when Robin pointed out that not all students would know what a concrete poem is, so they would need to teach that if they wanted concrete poetry as an option for the project. A group member suggested that only those students who already understand concrete poetry would likely choose that option, but Robin led them to include teaching concrete poetry, so that all students would have that as a genuine option. Marg guided them through reasonable time estimations for activities, which is always a sticking point for inexperienced teachers, and she focused their attention on the structuring of each day's activities in relation to their objectives.

As the second day's planning session ended, the group had a coherent unit plan that Dave offered to write out and distribute. The plan he distributed the following day included a general purpose and focus statement; daily lesson plans including goals, activities, and resources; prompter questions for personal and critical discussion of the story; optional material; and an assignment page for students. The group members were noticeably impressed with the coherence and thoroughness of their plan, and their comments revealed a bit of surprise that they had "pulled it together" out of their initial disjointed session.

The planning sessions of this group fascinated me; I watched a very diverse group of people struggle with and against each other to put together, finally, a coherent, teachable, mini-unit. They had been given almost complete freedom in designing a mini-unit within certain time constraints, a freedom that approximates that of most practicing teachers. The context of planning a unit collegially, though a fine way to develop high-quality teaching units, is not common among beginning teachers. While willing to accommodate each other's ideas for activities, the group members clearly needed the guidance and support offered by Marg to focus on objectives and to pull the teaching activities together; but they succeeded. As I had sensed the high level of emotions on the first day, I was interested in understanding the perspectives of some of the participants in the planning group.

Ruth's story: "All of us are so different"

Ruth described herself as a "loner," but she accepted the idea of the group work: "I really do work alone, so I thought, 'Okay, a group. I like these people, and I see that we really should do this.'" Her account of the first day's confusion showed her openness to other ways of working as well as her appreciation for the relation between the diverse styles she encountered in her group and those she would likely encounter as a teacher.

> That first day absolutely nothing came out, so we went home and thought about it and I went to two libraries and tried to do some research and talked to two librarians and came up with, you know, an idea or so and then I came that day, that gruelling day. I really went through a lot of changes in those first two hours because I went all the way from thinking at first,

"I've got really nothing. I've got no real ideas and . . . this is too broad, I want somebody to narrow this down for us." Then I gave my idea and everybody gave their ideas and we went. I just thought, "WOW, we've got a lot of really neat ideas here," because I was impressed with everybody's work. I don't know why it is that when I'm impressed with people it always shocks me. I always underestimate my cohorts or something. I really was amazed--like, Kate's poems, and the way everybody thought everything out so carefully and nicely. It really moved me. Then . . . there was Robin, who's my polar opposite, we both realized. . . . The way I see things always is [to] give a few inspirations and let them do the work. But Robin says, "No, not everybody works like that. You have to be prepared [if] nobody does get inspired." That's really good for me to hear that, because I don't think like that and I know a lot of kids do. . . . There's a lot that need way more structured confines to work within. And she's right. Although it's hard, like even now it's hard for me to say, "Yeah, she's right," but when it was happening, and we were discussing it, like I'm going, "No, I don't want to do it that way!" Just as we kept talking about it, it became more and more obvious that she was right. I'm going to have to keep that in mind as a teacher. That is one way of being a good teacher, remembering that some aren't like that. I have to be prepared for the ones who are not like that. So, that worked out really well for me. . . . It was a painful experience for me to go through, but I did feel that I had to change something inside, and I feel like it's not completely done because I always go to the easiest way for me to see things, but it's there now, I have that in my mind, I have to be prepared.

Jill: And you have a picture in your mind now of somebody who operates in a different way and you know how she thinks of it.

Ruth: Exactly, and I think she's beautiful. I think that the way she is perfect for who she is, and . . . I'm really impressed by people who are like that. . . . Then I went home and actually wrote the whole thing down in my diary. Then the next day I wrote it out again here because I wanted to use it as one of my portfolio things. Really, what amazed me most about the whole thing is that, you know, all of us are so different when we came together, and [it was] gruelling, with your help and Marg's help at last, at the very end, that last hour or so went very smoothly and it was like we really did bring it all together, and we came up with a plan that each one of us really likes, which is . . . really impressive. . . . I think that it just might depend on how much each person is

> willing to give in the group. And each one of these people gives everything. And they were all really trying to accommodate the other, and they were encouraging the other, yet they each wanted to give something too.

Kate's story: "We've got something new to share with each other every day"

Kate returned to the second day's planning session with several concrete poems touching upon the "appearance and reality" theme as it related to the role of "student" and "teacher" with which she struggled to come to terms. Naturally, this theme struck a resonant chord with her group members, who incorporated concrete poetry into their ideas about the unit. The following week, when the group members were teaching their mini-unit to the grade 9s, I spoke with Kate about her involvement with the planning group. Like Ruth, she understood the friction in terms of the working styles of the individuals, and also like Ruth, she appreciated the differing styles of the others.

> I'm a very organized person. I found it very difficult working in the group the other day. We all have our own method of teaching, and I have to have everything written out, full details, using those words, those descriptive words that tell me exactly what I'm going to do. . . .
>
> It's interesting working with the people in my group, because at first I thought there were a few people there that I didn't know how I was going to work with them. We just seemed so very, very different--in mannerisms, in ideas about teaching and writing, experiences, and things like that. But now, I'm really enjoying it. We've got something new to share with each other every day, and lately, it's been concrete poems. . . . And today in the classroom, we conducted a very successful group discussion with all of us participating, each one. We would just speak up and give our points of view and call for some answers. Each of us did that without thinking about it in advance, and it was wonderful because we're each so different, we brought up totally different things. I had to get them back on topic, because I thought they were missing the point, and I thought what is the use if they don't get this? Someone else was more

interested in the symbolism--they had to have that down. But today, together, we covered every possible area of that story. But it was because we all participated and felt comfortable enough to do that.

Jill: What made the change?

Kate: Taking a deep breath and standing back from the group and looking at "why was I so angry that first day?" It was because I wanted to push my ideas with them. Of course, I thought they were right, and I'm used to being in a position of authority [in summer and part-time jobs]. And I think once we each stepped back and realized that everyone had something to offer the group, and listen, and yes, indeed, it could be used, then we were fine.

Jill: What made you start listening to each other?

Kate: Spending hours and hours of useless time when we could have been working on our portfolios. We just kept coming to a halt over things. I think another problem, too, was we didn't really set the objectives. Then Marg came in and helped us with that, and we had a clearer focus. We did more in 45 minutes that one day than we completed that whole first day.

Jill: Could you have short-circuited that, or was that time necessary?

Kate: Possibly, but I think that none of us were used to working in a group--how long had it been since any of us had? But here, it has a purpose, we are going to teach these students. So I think we really had to butt our heads on the problems, round them out, and see what everybody had to offer. It was valuable. But it was frustrating--it reached that peak, when I didn't want to look at those people, and I KNOW they didn't want to look at me!

Teaching the "appearance and reality" mini-unit

The group's success

After the arduous planning process for the "appearance and reality" group, I couldn't help but feel that the actual teaching would be anti-climatic. The group members, though confident of their plan, were excited and apprehensive. I chose not to sit in on their first lesson with 9B, in keeping with my intention not to add to any feelings of stress the education students might have.

They returned from the early Monday morning session with 9B fairly dispirited; it went "dead" on them. They spoke with Florence, who offered reassurances: she reminded them that Monday mornings are often not high-response times for students, and, as they cast about for changes to make to improve the lesson, she advised them emphatically not to change anything until they did the same lesson with the 9Ds later in the day.

That afternoon I sat in on the 9D class, circulating a bit in the groups when the lesson was in progress. The lesson ran smoothly (even after a fire drill) and the students seemed to be responsive, interested, and polite. In this introductory lesson, each education student presented several objects to his or her students, asking them to guess the purposes of the objects. Christine had baker's tools, Kate a chain saw sharpener, Dave washing machine parts ("I took this thing apart just to have stuff for the lesson"), Amanda a threadmaker for screws; Robin a cabinet maker's tools, and Ruth jeweller's tools. After discussion within the groups, the education students pulled the class together to show the objects, revealed their actual purposes if the students had not already figured them out, and discussed as a class the idea that appearances are sometimes misleading, as well as provided an overview of the mini-unit. The group members were well-organized, attending to timing and pacing, and quite comfortable working with each other. Amanda led the wrap-up of the lesson, with others joining in to add various points.

Kate's dilemma

The following day I talked with Kate about the mini-unit. She agreed that the 9D class had gone well, but she felt that the 9B class had not gone well for her at all. While all the group members had been disappointed with the first lesson with 9B, most felt better about the success of the second lesson. Kate's negative feeling about the first class centred upon her relationship with her own group of students:

> I am having big problems. If we wouldn't have had the other class, that you saw, right after, I would have left there feeling horrible. I am sinking, dying there with my group. . . . There's this one boy who just puts his head on the desk, and I can see how uncomfortable he is with the group. I don't think he's ever worked with people like that. He's kind of chubby, glasses, short hair--I can see this is difficult for him, so he sits apart. Then there are two girls who are friends, but they are so embarrassed about having to talk that they just sit. . . . But these two girls are writing down ideas, which is good. I think they understand what's happening in class. Then there 's another girl, Florence showed me some of the posters she's done. She's a wonderful artist--like I craft words, she crafts lines. I really admire her because I can't even draw a stickman. The first day she was Miss Cool--"Oh, yeah, I party"--and that's as far I got with her. But then the story about the gang really got to her--because I think she's been "on the sidewalk bleeding," she strikes me as that type. And today, she was wearing a shirt that said "home boy," and that just reinforced that idea. But today it was back to the same. Nothing, I got nothing accomplished. So I told them that when they come tomorrow, I want them each to have brainstormed five solid ideas that we can put into a pot for a group project. Then I've been rethinking that, and I think tomorrow, I'm going to push for them each to do their own individual project, and I'll display it on one piece. We can agree on a theme, and then we can go our own ways, come up with anything they want as long as it follows the directions on the sheet, and then we'll put it all together, because I think they are all so different that I could be pushing the group thing.

I suggested that their group struggle as different individuals might be similar to the planning group's struggles to work together. Kate was unconvinced that her group of grade 9 students would pull together as her planning group had:

> But they don't have to do it, so they could remain like this forever. But we HAD to do it. And so I don't think I'm going to make an issue. I'll just say, "Would you prefer it if we each did something to contribute?"

Kate's comments continued to focus upon her own performance ("I stunk") when she discussed the lack of cohesion in her group. I pointed out that she seemed to be taking the group's problems personally and asked specifically, "How do they relate to you?" She replied, "They're not relating to me personally. It's such a contrast to the other grade 9 class. The ideas fly, I fly, they're above all that. It's not mediocre." She had considered how she had presented herself to the two groups and concluded that that was not the problem: "I think they feel strange with the people they have to work with." She opted not to attempt to force the group into cohesion. This clash of individuals, though she had recently experienced the same situation with her planning group, seemed irreconcilable given her time constraints and the different purposes of the group work: "I'm going to let them do the sort of thing that they'll feel more comfortable with, . . . but they have to participate." Her work with this group thus became a collection of individual work pasted together instead of the truly collective group work she saw develop in her other class.

As the mini-unit concluded, the grade 9s were working "feverishly" (Florence's word) with the education students to finish their projects, in joint ownership of the work. During the 9B class, Kate proudly showed me her 9D's group project in the front of the room. She had by this time given up on her 9B group: "I've cut them loose. It's their loss, they're the ones getting marked. I know that's a bad attitude, but . . . ."

I am always uncomfortable to see teachers write off students, especially when they have only worked with them for such a short time, so the teacher in me took dominance; I reminded Kate that if these were her students from September to June, she could not write them off so easily. She acknowledged this but hoped that perhaps they would learn from this "failure," when they saw the good work done by the other groups who had really worked together.

Kate's work with her "sentence demon" group in Don Garry's class, along with her work with the 9D "appearance and reality" group, had resulted in two positive experiences of group work for her, but she was unable to draw these experiences into her 9B group. She compared her work in the classes and saw some difference in the structure of the group work between the "sentence demon" and "appearance and reality" groups, attributing some of the success to the public presentation of the work in Don Garry's class:

> In Don's class, they have to get up in front of the class. They don't want to look like idiots, or if they do, they want to look like practiced idiots. They stand or fall as a group.

More importantly, however, she also made distinctions between the nature of the work in both classes. [The distinction does not explain why one group worked well and one didn't in the two "appearance and reality" classes, but it can help to explain her inability to help the group pull together.] She enjoyed teaching the concepts in both classes, but the theme of "appearance and reality" posed a fundamental problem for her as an education student grappling with the integration of her private persona and a teacher role:

> I like working on themes, but I like working on concepts of writing too, that's important to me. So it's not that I feel more comfortable teaching one over the other, but--this may sound funny to you, I kind of feel cheated when I'm doing, talking to my groups about appearance and reality when I come here and I pretend to be something I'm not by not wearing my nose ring. [I'm] talking to them about how they see me and how I see them, but they're really not seeing me how I am. I'm not seeing how they are either, because they're in a classroom. But they still wear what they want, and they're not even seeing a very important part of me. So I feel like I'm being a little superficial talking to them and wanting them to express their deepest experience with appearance and reality, when I'm sitting there with a hole in my nose and thinking,

> "Well, are they going to do this if I won't?" [Laugh.] It's stupid.
> **Jill:** No, it's very real. That's possibly going to affect your whole way of being with them.
> **Kate:** I don't know if they understand that I'm as much an outsider to the world as they feel they are. They think that all teachers conform and all teachers come from the same mold. And I know that they don't. But if I could show them that I don't, maybe they'd have a better understanding of appearance and reality.

Kate seemed at an impasse, and the next question seemed so obvious to me: Would you wear your nose ring here? I was conscious of the need not to push her into taking an unwanted risk, but I could not help but ask the question. Her reply showed the vision she had of breaking the impasse as well as her reluctance to take too big a risk:

> I thought about that. The class that I'm having problems with, I think they're pulling the "appearance and reality" thing on me, like they're saying, "Hey, we're cool, and you're a teacher, and this is how we act, and that's how you act. You try to get us to talk, and we don't." I thought, "Geez, I really wish we could relate." . . . I don't know if it would help [to talk about this with her group]. I don't know if it would help them learn more about appearance and reality. I think maybe it would spark them to share some of their own ideas, and what a brainstorming session we could have! You know, that they would say, "Well, I always wanted to dye my hair orange or get a tattoo. " One tough girl in my group has a tattoo, and I would love to talk to her about it. I think they're disgusting and dirty, but to me that's part of her reality. If I could feel brave enough to tell her, "Tell me about how you got that and how it relates to appearance and reality, and I'll tell you how this relates to appearance and reality." But how can you get them to be personal when you won't? . . . I don't know if that's a risk I want to take. . . . I think I may decide to focus on individual instead of group work, and maybe they'll share more of their experiences. . . . It's bothering me though.

The individual planners

Sitting in on an "appearance and reality" lesson in the grade 9 class in which the education students had planned individually, I noticed how different this class seemed from the other classes. Each group sat with its education student-leader, and it was obvious that groups were doing very different activities. Students in each group spent a few seconds or minutes every now and then to eavesdrop on the other groups to check on their friends. I felt privileged in some way because I had freedom of movement from one group to another. I wondered whether there would be trouble about various groups being perceived as having more work, more fun, more anything, than one's own.

Judy had read the beginning of a story in which two close friends have a disagreement; then she asked students to write a resolution to the story. The two girls in the group looked quite interested, the boys looked more dubious. One boy wanted to have an angel "zap their brains out." Judy was not buying this. I was reminded by her manner that Judy has adolescent children; she had obviously dealt with kids before and, though polite and positive, was not letting this boy off so easily. She talked about realistic endings and suggested with a firm smile that he keep thinking about it.

Britt's group was busy with newspapers and magazines, cutting photos and phrases for an "appearance and reality" collage. One boy offered to write a poem to accompany the collage. Britt agreed, looking pleased.

Arlene was showing her group a photo of a "hippie" family, in a rural setting, the children mostly naked and with dirt caked on them. Arlene asked her group to discuss the photo: "What does it look like? What does it make you think of?" I thought it was an interesting photo, but several students at first did not get beyond "weird." She asked students to speculate about what might have brought the family there. After a few minutes of discussion, she asked the group to role play the parents meeting a former friend who became a stockbroker. Arlene seemed very relaxed and able to joke with her group. They seemed perhaps confused about where she was going with this photo, but they responded to her confidence and humour with enjoyment; after a few minutes they were having an animated discussion of the "appearance and possible realities" of the situation.

In another group, Meagan had her students reading a story from the literature book. However, she appeared nervous when I joined her group, so I left after a minute or two. Meagan was often the quiet one in the staff room when the education students chatted together, and I was uncertain whether she was shy or preferred to remain aloof. At any rate, I tried not to intrude.

I noticed that even the students who were well engaged in the task or discussion at hand with their education student seemed not entirely focused; there was an awareness in the room of "other things" going on in other groups. The need to "check out" the other groups affected the education students as well as the grade 9s. It was not a competitive atmosphere of trying to "do better" than the other groups; it was simply curiosity, impossible to ignore.

This curiosity was not so much in evidence in the other classes of "appearance and reality" groups, where separate groups were involved in the same or similar activities. Having struggled individually or collectively with the challenge of freedom in planning, the education students then faced somewhat different teaching challenges depending upon the route they had taken in planning. Individually or collectively, however, they worked to bring their paper plans to life within the classroom.

Readers Theatre

Grade 6

Naomi Mullins, a grade 6 teacher, requested volunteers among the education students to work with her students to prepare readers theatre presentations. She spoke with enthusiasm about the work of the education students in the previous year, when they helped her class develop readers theatre presentations from the Chinese folktales they read during a unit on China. The readers theatre scripts this time were to be focused upon the theme of friendships old and new. Naomi spoke of this focus as one she likes for the beginning of the year, when she is also trying to build self-esteem and help her students feel comfortable with each other.

Though Naomi was flexible with scheduling, several interested education students simply could not fit a planning session for education students as well as a work session with the grade 6 students into their schedules. The performance of the readers theatre was set for the week following the education students' departure from McKernan, when they would be involved in their practicum and unable to attend. Still, Marlaine, Michael, Lorraine, and Anya agreed to work with the grade 6 class to prepare and rehearse the scripts. Naomi scheduled an hour and one-half of class time.

Marg set a noontime planning session with the volunteers and supplied dozens of books of poetry and children's stories for resources. With her help, the education students agonized over finding scripts, eventually finding satisfactory ones.

Naomi's class was located in a portable classroom, a little world unto itself. During the rehearsal period, there was much activity, as students tramped in and out for errands and washroom breaks. The classroom was, as were most of the elementary classrooms at McKernan, a comfortable, warm place where students could find clusters of desks for group work or floor space to curl up or stretch out to work.

As I went from group to group, I felt that I was an intrusion--the grade 6 students were becoming comfortable with their education students, but I was not someone they knew. So I circulated only briefly, leaving a group after a minute or two. All the groups seemed focused on their scripts and I did not want to interrupt.

Marlaine sat across from two girls, obviously good friends of the "giggle-together" variety. They were practicing a reading from T.S. Eliot's cat poems, "Mungojerrie and Rumpleteaser." The three of them seemed quite relaxed together and undisturbed by my presence, so I remained with them. The girls experimented with intonations and divisions for the reading, discussing the text with increasing perception and conviction in their interpretations. Marlaine exchanged glances with me occasionally to show her enjoyment of the girls, and it was clear that the girls were enjoying working with Marlaine. Later, Marlaine spoke of how impressed she was with their reading and analysis of the poem:

> I liked seeing how they worked their way through the poem as we re-read it. They got more and more out of it as they kept re-reading it to figure out who should say what. I tried to let them decide how to divide up the lines, and it was neat--they, after a while, got to a pretty sensible way of doing it, without me telling them, "You read this and you read this."

The education students who had worked with the grade 6 students all expressed their pleasure with their experience. They found that it helped them to place their grade 7 students better on a developmental continuum, that they had a better sense of how well grade 6 students can work, read, and think. "They seem like such little kids, but they can do real work. I wouldn't have thought grade 6s or 7s could do things like [readers theatre]," Anya noted.

Education students perform their readers theatre script

Perhaps readers theatre is infectious. While searching for readers theatre scripts for Naomi's class, Marlaine, Michael, and Lorraine began to work together writing their own readers theatre script. Several work sessions took place in the staff room, where the sight of the three of them huddled together over their paper, talking and laughing, provided some advance publicity for their performance.

These three education students, like most of the class, were working through their ambivalent feelings about their status and identity at McKernan and in student teaching. They talked and wrote about their confusion in various terms and shared their thoughts; the readers theatre group borrowed a phrase from Kate's poem about being a student and a teacher, in which she asked, "Which hat do I wear?" Lorraine and Marlaine spoke with me about the writing of their readers theatre script; both acknowledged having begun writing it with Michael because they were troubled by their roles. After writing it, they felt better able to accept the duality of these roles, as Marlaine said, "Now I feel that, yes, I am both of these things, and I can live with that without a resolution."

The work that the education students were doing in classes with McKernan students was infiltrating their talk and writing. Marlaine, Michael, and Lorraine used the form of readers theatre; they focused on the "appearance and reality" of being students and teachers; and their script incorporated a "demon," a "devil" who voiced the student thoughts.

The performance was set for lunchtime in Don Garry's room. Verbal invitations were issued in the staff room. Several education students, Don, Marg, and I were present. Lorraine, sitting at a desk, played the role of the student teacher. Marlaine as the "angel" and Michael as the "devil" stood behind her, each speaking into one of her ears as they offered their conflicting views on her dilemmas as a student teacher.

"What Hat Do I Wear?"

ST: Hi! I'm your teacher/friend from the U of A, and today we'll be looking at the "double negative sentence demon!"

Angel: Don't worry, all will be well. These kids look up to you and respect you for what you are doing with them.

ST: That's great, Michael! Can anybody add to Michael's definition? (pause) Can you think of anything that could be missing from your great definition, Michael?

Devil: Holy Hanna, you're up the proverbial creek without a paddle! These little monsters wouldn't know a double negative if it bit them in the butt. Just give them the definition and get on with it!

Angel: No, you know these kids have a basic understanding of your concept and more importantly, they really want to please you and help you.

ST: Billy and Marlaine, please don't draw on each other! Try to stay on task and finish that poster. You know it's worth 25% of your final mark! O.K., Michael and Lorraine, have you come up with any more examples since yesterday? You realize we need nine more.

Devil: One day left and these mindless midgets haven't accomplished diddly. When is that bell going to ring? Why don't you face reality? You're a poor excuse for a teacher. Go home, relax, eat a pizza, go see a movie, take a bottle of pills, and drink a whole bunch of vodka because that's the only way out of this hole that you dug for yourself when you decided to become a teacher! These kids don't give a shit and neither do you. Look at them. They still don't know what their sentence demon is, let alone are they able to define it and explain it to their classmates. Why don't you do something productive with your life?

Angel: What you are doing is productive. So what if the kids are bad today? Yesterday they were fantastic. Just wait until ten years down the road and one of these so-called mental midgets gets elected mayor of our city and he thanks you for helping him learn more about the language. Help these kids learn to love to learn and they will be forever in your debt and you will be always remembered.

ST: All right, class, my group would now like to offer to you their presentation. I hope you enjoy it!

Devil: I can't believe you are actually going through with this! You let them write their own examples and questions for the work sheet when you knew you could write better ones. You let them come up with the concept for this presentation when you thought it was a ridiculous idea and now you're going to let them embarrass you in front of everyone! You simp!

Angel: I'm so proud of you! You let those kids explore and discover on their own. You knew that if you would have choreographed their presentation it would have been more "polished and professional," but you let them learn in their own special way and thus they really internalized the concept that you taught.

ST: I'm in a dilemma. Nothing new, really. In fact, dilemmas happen on quite a regular basis with me. There are always pros and cons to be weighed, dos and don'ts to be considered, and choices and decisions to be made. My present dilemma involves a matter of role. What role am I playing?

Devil: Am I a student or

Angel: am I supposed to function as a teacher?

ST: What hat do I wear? I almost seem to be going through a kind of identity crisis. Yes, that's it. I'm having a mini-identity crisis at McKernan.

Devil: Am I a student?

Angel: Am I a teacher?

ALL: What hat do I wear?

ST: The whole McKernan School project is an excellent variation to the regular curriculum instruction classes. It functions as a good transition between taking classes and student teaching. I am given an excellent opportunity to look inside classrooms without having the load of responsibility that the teacher has. Instead, I am a university student helper--a facilitator--but just where on the line between student and teacher does "helper" fit?

Devil: I am torn between my student conscience that tells me to get in there and get this project done and

Angel: my newly-acquired philosophies as a new teacher who talks about motivating the students to do their own work so that they can learn by actually doing it themselves.

ST: In other words, I am to be the resource person, the motivator or "nudger;" but where do leading and nudging become doing?

Devil: Am I a student?

Angel: Am I a teacher?

ALL: What hat do I wear?

Devil: The student in me becomes anxious when the students in my group from 8C are wasting their time socializing and being downright unproductive. Inside, I'm telling myself that I have to do something or else we won't get our project done by the end of the week.

Angel: At the same time, the teacher in me is saying that I should back off because it is the students who should be doing the work. I'm just here to help them.

ST: Like the ball in a ping-pong game, my mind jumps back and says,

Devil: "But if you don't do something, this presentation is going to be a real flop."

ST: Then, when it comes down to the bottom line, I fear that the success or failure of my group's project is a reflection of my teaching skills.

Devil: If the presentation is poor, then it looks like I'm a poor teacher. Am I a student?

Angel: Am I a teacher?

ST: Again, I ask myself,

ALL: "What hat do I wear?"

ST: Finally, who am I when it comes down to my relationships with the different people in the school? To the students,

Devil: am I their friend

Angel: or am I still an authority figure?

ST: To the teachers in the school,

Devil: am I a student because I come from the university

Angel: or do they see me as an almost-colleague?

ST: I remember coming in the first day hoping that the students in my group would like me and be happy to work with me. I suppose at the same time, they were hoping that I'd like them, and I do.

Devil: I found myself trying to talk with them at their level so that I wouldn't seem like someone who could not relate to them.

Angel: I must say, also, that from the time I've spent with my students so far, they seem to accept me and we've all gotten along very well.

Devil: In a sense I guess you could say that I'm their friend

Angel: even though I have heard them refer to me as the teacher.

ST: So there it comes again, "it" meaning that same old dilemma. What is my role?

Devil: Am I a student?

Angel: Am I a teacher?

ALL: What hat do I wear?

ST: Finally, who do the other teachers think I am?

Devil: Am I only a university student in their eyes

Angel: or do they actually see me as a person who will very soon graduate into their profession, thus making me their colleague?

ST: I suppose they probably see me in both lights. The line is not distinct. I am both. I, and my fellow university students, are in a category all to ourselves. We are a middle link between the two domains.

Devil and Angel: We are neither and we are both.

ST: What hat do I wear?

ALL: The answer is clear, one of each.

ST: I'm so proud of you! You guys really made me look great but don't forget that you really did all the work. The more you explored and researched our topic, the better able you were to express it to the rest of the class. You are all fantastic, and I won't soon forget you. You made me realize I have some ability as a teacher and that it is important for me to remember the student in me so I can be more perceptive to your needs, and if I keep learning from my students as they keep learning from me, my life will be filled with endless rewards.

ALL: Thanks!

The performers bowed and grinned, accepting our applause graciously. We were all pleased that they had recognized that scripts need to be performed. Performers and audience talked for a few minutes about the "in-betweenness" of the education students' roles at McKernan, with the audience complimenting Lorraine, Marlaine, and Michael for capturing the dilemma so well. By popular request, the readers theatre performance was repeated at the "thank-you" social gathering so that all teachers and education students could enjoy it. Only much later, after they gave me a copy of their script, did I catch the irony of the last speech of the student teacher. Having struggled successfully to be student-centred, the student teacher thanked her students for "making me look great." Their performance anxiety was a large part of the dilemma of defining roles, but that anxiety had been satisfied by the "students' performance."

Writers Workshops

The assignments

During the time in which the education students worked at McKernan School, they were engaged in writing their portfolio assignment for their curriculum-and-instruction courses (see more detailed explanation p. 88). The portfolio was to be handed in at the end of their two-week stay at McKernan. The requirements for the four pieces of writing were that two of them be based upon the course readings and two be based upon their work at McKernan. The students were not required to have conferences about their writing with other students or Marg, but she strongly recommended that they do so.

As the two weeks progressed, all the education students took advantage of the proximity, interest, and comraderie of their peers to have conferences with each other. In addition, most education students asked for conferences with Marg, Don Garry, and/or me. Often, the conference was prefaced by the education student noting, "This is the first poem I've written since grade 12" or, for eleven of them, "the first poem I've ever written." We realized afterward that the education students seemed to sense a certain hierarchy, as several of them would have a conference about a piece of writing in various drafts with another student, then with Don, then me, and finally Marg. I think they took Don as the classroom writing teacher, removed from the university sphere, and they saw me as a "university" person associated with Marg but lacking her status as "professor." Their awareness that Marg was the only one who would evaluate their work made them save her for last, as if their writing, though still in draft form, needed to be as polished as possible before she saw it.

Twelve education students were involved with a writers workshop structure in either Don Garry or Stuart Capstick's classes. Don taught an option course in writers workshop which, due to its popularity in the preceding year, became available only for grade 9 students. The students met for three class periods each week, but due to the school scheduling, the periods were on Thursday and a double period on Friday, thus giving students an intensive writing experience at the end of the week, with a rather long hiatus until the next week's classes. In Don's class, the students' desks were arranged in a horseshoe shape, with the education students positioned on the inside of the horseshoe to enable them to work with students. The six education students who worked in this class held writing conferences about work in progress with two or three students, as well as evaluating the work that these students handed in at the end of the week.

Stuart's grade 7 language arts class was also structured as a writers workshop, and six students worked there. In Stuart's class, the education students were invited to circulate around the room, asking students to talk about their writing in progress and helping others to get ideas. Stuart's class had just returned from their wilderness excursion camp at YoWoChas, so the assumption was that they had plenty of inspiration for writing. They were not required, however, to write about their YoWoChas experience if they preferred another topic.

A note about reporting this data: For the most part, I could not act as a real observer in individual conferences between education students and McKernan students without intruding unacceptably, so those conferences are reported from education students' journals, portfolio writings, and/or conversations. In discussing the work that took place and the emphasis that developed on writing and writers workshop, it is difficult to separate the education students' writing portfolio coursework from their work with McKernan students. Each work informed the other, so they will be discussed in tandem. Education students, affected by the students they worked with in writers workshop and other classes, wrote their own works about their perceptions of the students; they then asked for conferences about the writing, which in turn helped them to understand and interact with the students. Even the education students who were not specifically involved in writers workshop classes became involved with learning how to participate in a conference, either as the writer or the conferencer.

Don's role as writing teacher

As the interest of the education students in their own and their students' writing blossomed, the role of Don Garry as a teacher of writing cannot be over-estimated. In addition to the six education students assigned to Don's writers workshop, many others came to know him through their work in his grade 8 "sentence demon" classes. Don became known for his interest in conferencing with education students and his skill in discussing writing. As his reputation grew, so did the numbers of education students who brought him their writing and asked for conferences. Don's sensitive, honest responses to their work, as well as his skillful handling of writing conferences, did much to teach the education students about their own writing and about the teaching of writing. Anya explained his help to another education student who was puzzling over conferencing with a grade 7 student:

> What helped me with knowing what questions to ask--I think that's the hardest part is knowing what to ask, because you're trying to clue into what they're thinking. So you just ask, "What made you think of this?" What helped me to get to that was a writers conference with Don Garry. I had written a poem, and I said, "I'd like to have a conference with you, just to see what these conferencing sessions are all about." And he cut right to the core, like I was just sweating and shaking and turning red, because I'd never read anything I'd written to anybody besides my bosom buddies, and here is a strange person standing there going, "Well, what made you want to write this?" or "Tell me a little about how you got started on this." So right away, he got some background information on why you're doing it. And then, after I'd read it, he started saying "Well, what does this mean? What do you think about that? What's it tell you? What do you want to tell the reader? What are you trying to convey to the reader?" And then we got on the whole subject of the psychological idea behind the poem, and it just starts giving you ideas on what to write again.

Anya's appreciation of Don's help was echoed again and again by the other education students in comments to me and in their journals. Barbara, who introduced herself to her colleagues in Marg's class the first day as "I'm a poet," also learned from Don. She asked Don to have a conference with her about a poem which detailed a particularly traumatic event of her childhood. She wrote about the conference:

> I want to experience a writing conference, to see what it is like to have a writer talk about my writing. I have NEVER talked about my writing in progress before--talk about why I did this or that, so this is new to me. Don agreed--it was a strong poem. He liked it. He said that he wouldn't change much but he did want to ask some questions about form. . . . We talked about my choice of line breaks. I discovered that I didn't make any decisions about where my lines ended--they just ended. . . . I really appreciated how Don encouraged me to learn to craft my poem. He left my writing my own. He gave me a book of poems to read by Charles Bukowski. As soon as I read a couple of his poems I knew what he was getting at. . . .

Toward the end of the second week, I complimented Don one day on his willingness to spend time with the education students on their writing. I spoke of how much his help meant to them in crafting their writing and in learning how to talk with their students in turn about their writing. In characteristic fashion, he saw the help he had given in terms of his own learning as well. He spoke of the good it did him to conference with adults who were at different stages of their own writing.

Barbara and Ashley freewrite together

Several education students who worked in Stuart's class of grade 7 writers workshop were uneasy about their work: how not to be too intrusive, how to ask the right questions.

Barbara wrote in her journal of the difficulty and the success she experienced in working with Ashley:

> The last time the university students invaded 7B I felt uncomfortable. We, all six of us, went around sticking our noses into students' writing (it was a wonder they had a second of free time to write). Today I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to talk to them about their writing. I just wanted to sit at a desk and work on some of my own writing (this must be one of my poor student attitudes that I haven't exterminated yet). I tried to convince Stuart that there were just too many of us roaming around and that I was concerned that we were bothering the students. He didn't go for it--"Bother them, they need to learn how to talk about their writing."
>
> Okay the point is taken, I need to learn how to talk to students about their writing.
>
> I don't really know why I walked over to Ashley. Maybe it was because she looked like she was as enthused as I was to be there. She sat there with a blank page. I asked her if she had any idea what she was going to write about. I was informed politely that she was intending to write a poem. . . about something. Her eyes added EVENTUALLY, SO DON'T SIT HERE AND GAWK AT ME.
>
> I told her that I would try to help her get some ideas going if she would try an exercise with me. The rules were: write for ten minutes straight--without lifting your pen. I told her to write ANYTHING!! If nothing comes to mind, write something about how your mind is blank. She looked at me as if I was really queer--but today I didn't care.
>
> I got out my orange marker and said go. Finally some time to myself. I wrote and wrote and wrote. I peeked up, she was cautiously, making sure that the words on her page were logically connected. "Just write anything," I said. I buried my head again. . . . I finished writing another page, she says, "wow"--I smile and want to say, "If you knew what this orange scrawl says you wouldn't be so impressed." "Keep going." I look up after a while and see that she is drawing a damn horse. You are supposed to be writing, not drawing. How soon I forgot Nancie Atwell's Jeff [a boy who came to writing through drawing]!
>
> She turned the page over and started writing again. I finished another page and then another and finally the ten minutes were up. She asked me if I wanted to see what she had written. There were strong images about the carpenters taking out the school windows . . . and memories of friends from Ontario (most of them being horses). She also has statements about how she hates

> the class but I decided to ignore them. So many ideas to write about. I got excited. I shared my writing with her . . . nothing made sense. I wonder what she thought.
>
> I asked her what topic she was going to go with. She couldn't say (that's what a shrug means, doesn't it?) I told her she should write about horses since she seems very interested in them. "I can't write about horses," she said. "I've tried to ever since I was in grade three. I just can't."
>
> Nancie Atwell and Donald Murray would have died if they saw what I did next--
>
> Here is a sheet with the title Horses, write everything that comes to mind about horses. What do they look like? What do they smell like? What does it feel like to ride them? How do you feel about horses? Then I left her to write. I began to think about what I had done. I wasn't too impressed with my tactless shove. I basically demanded that she write a poem about horses. I wouldn't blame her if she still had a blank sheet of paper when I went back.
>
> Surprise!!! While I was away Ashley wrote two poems and a biography of her favourite horses. One of her poems sent a shiver down my spine--it was good. I had to tell Stuart that Ashley wrote some poems--he had told me before that he has had trouble getting her to write. Stuart was as excited as I was--(and he was full of compliments for me).
>
> I felt great. Is this the rewarding part of teaching? I felt an urge to write Nancie Atwell and tell her my first success story--to tell her that, in spite of me, Ashley wrote something she cared about. I'm glad I went to 7B.

By the following day Barbara's elation had subsided somewhat as she considered that the freewriting that had been so successful the preceding day might not work with another student or even with Ashley on another day. As Barbara entered the class, Ashley was waiting for her with an illustrated copy of her poem. Her first success encouraged her to keep learning:

> Ashley felt open to me--that still makes me feel good, but at the same time I have to realize that teaching writing is very complicated. Not all kids are going to respond to me or to the same conferencing techniques.

Barbara's realization that "teaching writing is very complicated" struck me as a transition for her. In my initial encounters with Barbara, she presented herself as a poet focused upon her own writing development. She requested a writing conference with Don Garry "to experience a writing conference, to see what it is like to have another writer talk about my writing." She found it a powerful experience and sought me out in my university office late that afternoon to tell me about it. As she began to talk, she burst into tears, leaving me wondering until, after a few minutes, she could explain that her conference with Don had been very helpful but that the emotions evoked by discussing the poem had affected her. In "debriefing" this writing conference with me, Barbara maintained a focus on herself as the writer of the poem. She appreciated Don's sensitivity toward her and her poem, but she did not seem to make connections with teaching writing. As she worked in Stuart's class with Ashley, Barbara certainly began the session with a preoccupation with herself as writer; but as the work with Ashley unfolded, her focus became the teaching of writing.

Ursula: Talking and writing about the class trip

In Stuart's writing workshop, Ursula learned about the grade 7 students' YoWoChas excursion and about leading students into writing. Though she had read In the Middle, and was "willing to approach kids and learn with them" about writing, the reality of the students' diversity was a surprise to her; she saw some "lone writers filling page upon page while other social butterflies were more interested in just talking." She began by approaching students who were writing and asked to read their work. Upon doing so, she was taken aback by the widespread tendency of the writers to assume too much knowledge on the reader's part. These students, in writing about a game of predator and prey they played during their trip, neglected to explain the game. Ursula was confused, unable to make much sense of the writing, but sensitive about the writers' feelings if she criticized their work:

> I came upon sentences like, "He swung the red flag and I lost a life." Instead of expressing my confusion, I asked questions such as, "Who swung the red flag? What was his/her role in the game? What was the meaning behind the red flag? Just how many lives did you have? How did you feel being a herbivore? Do you think that the game was fair? Why?" In this manner, kids knew that I was keenly interested in their writing, yet they had not supplied enough information for their reader; the last thing that I wanted to do was insult them.

Armed with knowledge of the predator-and-prey game, Ursula then approached several students who were not writing anything and initiated a discussion. Students became animated as they talked about the game and about a graphic film depicting the slaughter of wolves they also saw during the trip. Ursula finally suggested that they write their feelings about the connections they were discussing between this game and the film, and "to my surprise, many were suddenly on-track writing quietly."

One boy who was eager to chat remained unwilling to write, despite Ursula's efforts to engage him in other topics as well as the wilderness excursion. She came away from the session, as did Barbara, with a feeling of success tempered by the reality of the complexity of teaching writing. She had confronted one of the most common writing problems--the assumption of too much knowledge on the part of the reader--and had found in her questioning and discussion with the students a way to help a writer avoid that problem.

Edith: "The workshop has an atmosphere . . . uniquely its own"

Working in Don's writers workshop, Edith claimed as she presented her newly-written poems, had helped her to overcome her "poetryphobia." She wrote in her portfolio of her approval of a workshop approach, as well as her difficulty with evaluation of students' work:

> I didn't actually think that writers workshop really worked until I saw it in motion. What an incredible thing--students who want to write, who know what to write, and who actually write--and write very well. The workshop has an atmosphere that is uniquely its own, that no other teacher-centred class could have. You can almost hear the gears turning. An entire roomful of bright, talented minds all working, and conferencing, and revising, and rewriting together. It's not something you'd see in a traditional class, yet it's better. The students, and even the instructor, are given the freedom of choice and style and length; and the results are phenomenal.
>
> My problems in this setting were mostly evaluative problems, in that I had a hard time assessing a grade, even marking holistically, to a poem or a book review. They were all better than most of the grades 10-12 work I marked in my phase II teaching. As you can imagine, this threw me. Watching one girl go from writing a chapter in a novel to writing a poem about the environment was an amazing thing to witness, but having to mark both was very difficult.

Other education students also grappled with the "demon" of evaluation, made easier for some and harder for others when they knew their students' efforts with the writing. They shared their students' writing with each other in the staff room, working together to make a suitable evaluation. Because they had only a few pieces of work to evaluate, they were able to consider each one thoroughly.

Annette: On being a human being

Annette was shaken by an encounter with a student. She had asked a grade 8 group what they wanted to be when they grow up. One boy replied, "A human being." The other kids laughed. Annette felt that the boy was serious in his comment and seemed insecure. Her own reply to the boy seemed to her, as she related the incident to me in the staff room, to be feeble and inadequate; she had said, "Oh, I think you're a good human being already." Her curiosity about the boy and her frustration with her own inadequacy led her to explore the boy's comment in a poem. As she worked through several drafts, her thinking broadened from her questions about the boy to include, centrally, her consideration of herself as a teacher.

In addition to conferring with Marg and Don, Annette also asked me for several writing conferences during the drafts of this poem. As we talked about the incident and the poem over the course of a week, she remained upset about her failure to say something useful to this boy. Eventually, when her poem seemed to be in its final form, I suggested that she show it to him, to let him know that she was affected by what he said, as well as to try to resolve some of the lingering questions she had about why he made the comment. Annette said she would, but I did not ask her more about it for fear of seeming to push her into doing so. Her poem is reproduced as Figure 1.

A reader seeing Annette's poem printed on the page and understanding her intention to parallel the thoughts of the student and the student teacher immediately understands the visual message of the uneven columns: that the poem focuses upon the student teacher more than upon the student. The poem is primarily about Annette. However, in talking with her as she worked through the form and meaning of her poem when the experience was still so raw, I chose not to point out this aspect of the poem; I felt that I would be intruding too much to make a suggestion of that kind. In time, when she re-reads her poem, perhaps Annette will shape it differently, but that will be her decision rather than my suggestion.

Amanda: "Zig zagging"

Amanda asked me to confer about the first draft of writing about writers workshop. The inspiration for the piece was her interest in Nancie Atwell's discussion of her movements around her own classroom. Atwell said that she

Along the Way

The student teacher just walked in.
I want her to like me. But she won't.
She will pay more attention
to the smart ones.
They all do.

The smart ones, they tell her
What they want
To Be
When they grow up.
Dentist, doctor, lawyer,
Nurse, Teacher.

I start to panic.
It's my turn to speak.
Hurry Hurry Hurry
She already thinks
You're stupid.

Then I tell her.
I tell her
I want
To Be
A Human Being.

Kids are laughing.
Don't look up.
Don't.

What is she thinking?
Does she care?
Why should she?

She is a teacher,
And I,
Am not even Human.

I walk into
The classroom:
Worried, Scared, Afraid/
The corners of my lips going down.

Kids,
tell me I'm
A Teacher.
Tell me I was born
To Be
A Teacher.

Do something,
say something,
I need to know.

I am scared.

They begin to chatter
About future prospects,
Seemingly not aware
Of my trembling voice,
My dark eyes.

Then it's Jim's turn
To speak.
He tells me he wants
To Be
A Human Being.

And he is serious.
Quick, say something.
Respond. He needs
A response.

So I tell him
I think he is
A nice person.

A nice person.
Couldn't I do
Any better?
He needed a response.
And a shallow fool
Gave him
Emptiness.

Stop it.
Stop it.
Everyone makes mistakes.
I look at the laughing kids,
Laughing at him.
Laughing at Jim.
Or
Are they laughing at me,
The Teacher?

I slowly sink.
Down,
Down,
Down.
Somewhere
Along the way
I meet Jim.

Together and alone
We become Human.

Fig. 1. Annette's poem, "Along the Way."

had stopped going up and down the rows in favour of "zig zagging" throughout the room. Amanda made two notes in her journal about "zig zagging," enjoying the phrase because she is a seamstress; it conjured sewing images in her mind. Marg's response in the journal was "a teacher zig zagging is an interesting metaphor."

When Amanda discussed her early draft, I picked up this "thread" of conversation enthusiastically, as a fellow seamstress. Together we brainstormed many extensions of the sewing metaphor for teaching writing. Amanda saw Atwell/the teacher as the needle, the class as the fabric or material, and writing as the thread connecting them. I asked whether the roles would ever change. This question sent her off to work on another draft, as she considered some possibilities. Several days later she presented me with a copy of her revised writing, titled "Writers Workshop," an extension of her thinking about sewing as a metaphor for teaching writing. In the first section, she detailed the sewing metaphor as she had originally conceived it:

> The teacher
> Moves about the classroom. First, in one direction;
> pauses briefly; then continues moving but in an
> opposite direction.
> Her path resembles a zig zag.
> She is the needle that moves from place to place.
> The distance varies.
> There are twenty to thirty pieces of material
> through which she moves.

After working through the metaphor in this manner, she expands it, and through it, her statement of her understanding of teaching writing:

> Sometimes the roles reverse.
> The material becomes the needle and the needle
> experiences being the material.
> As well, sometimes the needle is not involved in the
> completion of the stitch.
> That is, the material takes over both roles.
> The thread becomes the strand that connects material
> to other pieces of material.
> Or material to itself.

Amanda's writing shows her understanding of sewing and the intricacies of interactions among thread, needle, and fabric, including the need for a suitable "tension" or balance among them to produce a "polished piece of work." Her understanding of sewing helped her to extend her thinking about writing, an activity in which she had less expertise. As we talked that day about her first draft, we spoke primarily in terms of sewing, not writing; yet in exploring the metaphor, Amanda extended her thinking about teaching writing. She began with a transactional view of the teacher as needle "acting" upon the fabric; but that view does not hold up for sewing, let alone teaching, as I hinted in asking whether the roles ever change. As a seamstress, Amanda knew of other ways for needle, thread, and fabric to interact, and in her later draft, she extended that understanding to teaching.

Kate's concrete poems

A mania for writing concrete poems swept the education students. Everyone, it seemed, was using the concrete poem seriously or humorously to explore the roles of "student" and "teacher" or to explore perceptions of McKernan students.

Kate started the mania with her "STUDENT TEACHER" poem, an instant hit with her colleagues (See Figure 2). Kate is a prolific writer and voracious reader who has a box full of her writing and keeps lists of the books she reads. When I asked how she had started in on the concrete poems, she laughed:

> I really went on a binge. Marg suggested it in class, and I went home and thought about the example she gave us--you know, the turtle. And I realized that I had never written concrete poems.

She corrected herself, saying that she had gone home and looked over her collection of her poems. There were in fact some concrete poems, but she realized that they were written

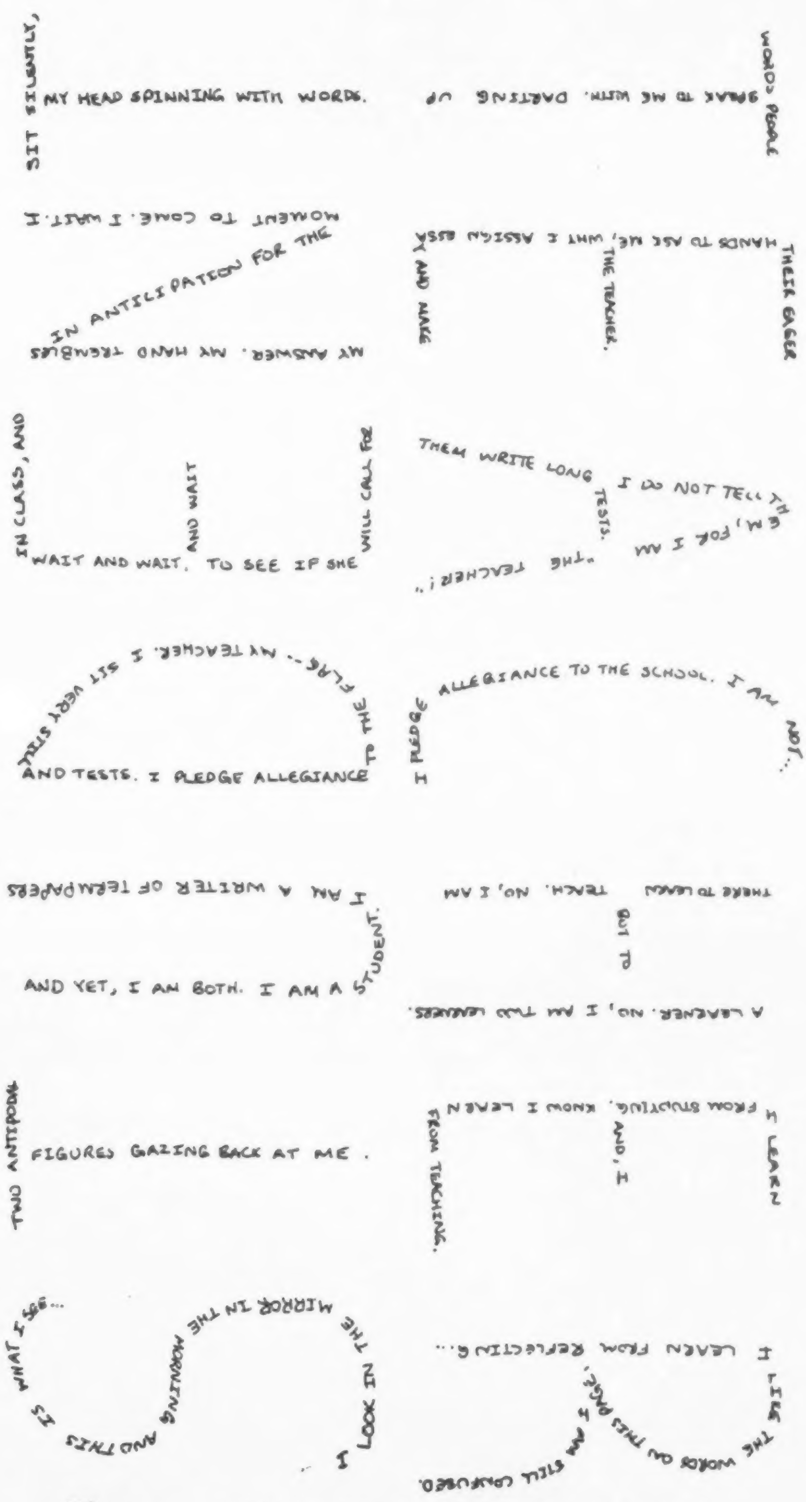

I LOOK IN THE MIRROR IN THE MORNING AND THIS IS WHAT I SEE...
TWO ANTIPODAL FIGURES GAZING BACK AT ME .
AND YET, I AM BOTH. I AM A STUDENT.
I AM A WRITER OF TERMPAPERS
AND TESTS. I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG -- MY TEACHER. I SIT VERY STILL
IN CLASS, AND WAIT AND WAIT. AND WAIT TO SEE IF SHE WILL CALL FOR
MY ANSWER. MY HAND TREMBLES IN ANTICIPATION FOR THE MOMENT TO COME. I WAIT. I
SIT SILENTLY, MY HEAD SPINNING WITH WORDS.
WORDS PEOPLE SPEAK TO ME WITH. DARTING UP
THEIR EAGER HANDS TO ASK ME, THE TEACHER. WHAT I ASSIGN ESSAY AND MAKE
THEM WRITE LONG TESTS. I DO NOT TELL THEM, FOR I AM "THE TEACHER!"
I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE SCHOOL. I AM NOT...
THERE TO LEARN BUT TO TEACH. NO, I AM A LEARNER. NO, I AM TWO LEARNERS.
I LEARN FROM STUDYING. AND, I KNOW I LEARN FROM TEACHING.
I LIKE THE WORDS ON THIS PAGE, I AM STILL CONFUSED. I LEARN FROM REFLECTING...

Fig. 2. Kate's poem, "STUDENT TEACHER."

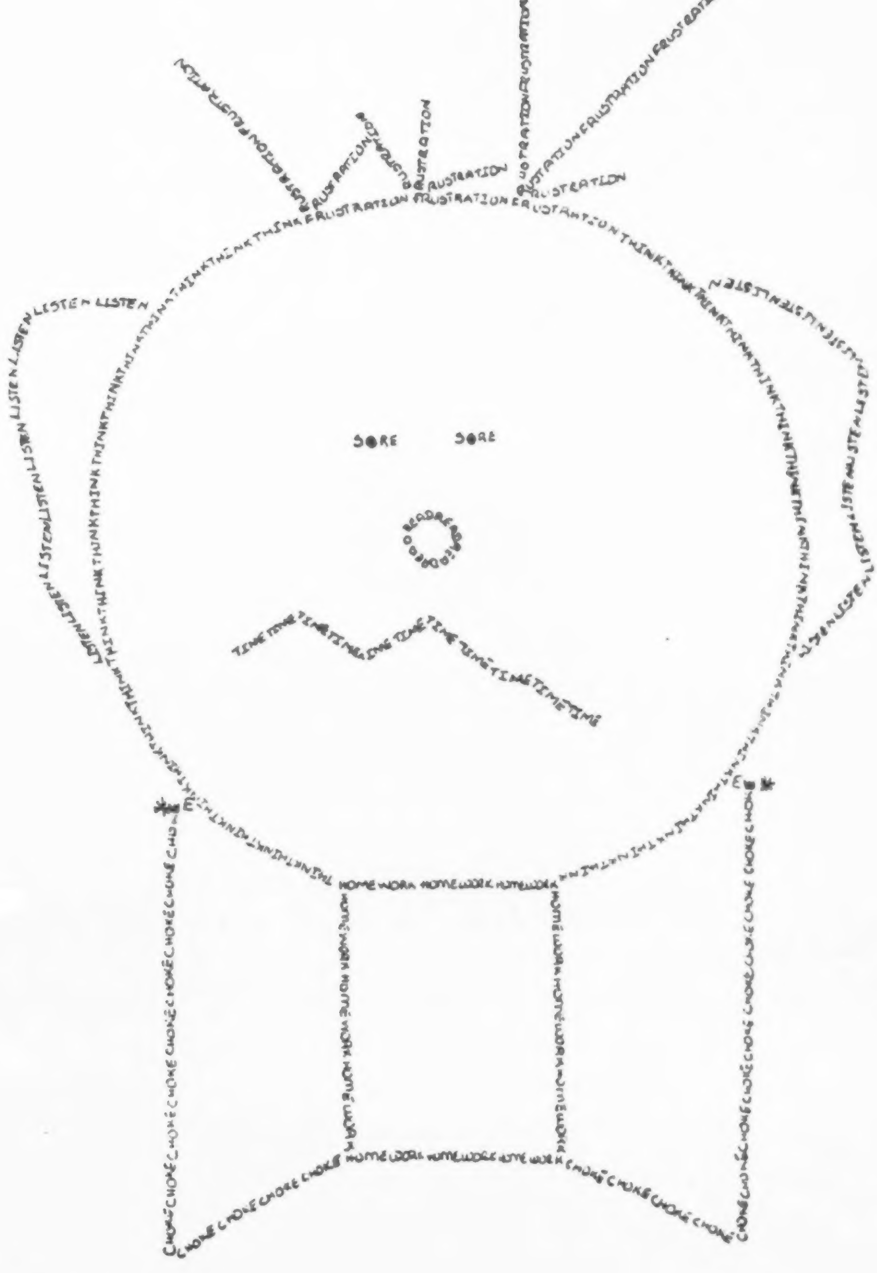
on teacher-given topics, so she felt she had never really written one.

> I had to write about something dealing with appearance and reality because that was the theme for Florence's class. But this time I could decide what sub-theme to write on. . . . I thought, here I am, I'm a student, but I'm a teacher--no, I'm a student teacher, but do they really go together? And I got really excited when I wrote that first poem with the reflection. . . . In the first part, when I'm writing on the lines of the student, I tried to talk about raising my hand in fear, asking the teacher a question, and then I'm speaking about the words that I'm speaking to the teacher. That's when I flipped it to the teacher's side. People are speaking words to me and raising their hands in anticipation of what I'm going to say. So I tried to make them parallel but to show their differences too, because it's not a reflection unless I do that.

Kate's capturing of the duality of her roles as student and teacher seemed to show the other education students the power of the physical representations of word and image. Robin's concrete poem is a more graphic, humorous representation of her fatigue at the end of her work at McKernan (See Figure 3). Amanda used a student's name as the graphic part of her poem about a boy whom she tried to understand. Her form became popular as other education students followed suit.

For several education students, the concrete poems became a way of integrating their learning from their curriculum-and-instruction courses with their McKernan work: expressive writing was a new venture for them; their thematic work on "appearance and reality" paralleled their exploration of their double status as students and teachers; and their work with the McKernan students helped them to focus upon these students as people and as learners.

The writers workshops were certainly the central focus of work and learning for many education students, both for confident and insecure writers. In their workshop participation as writers and as conference partners for peers and junior high school students, the education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THINK THINK THINK THINK THINK THINK
LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN
SORE
SORE
READREAD
TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME
HOMEWORK HOMEWORK HOMEWORK
CHORE CHORE CHORE CHORE CHORE CHORE

Fig. 3. Robin's poem, "Student Teacher."

students' understandings of writing, teaching, and learning came together as they focused upon individuals and writing.

Deconstructing Walls and Assumptions: Conversations with Dave

Dave had been quiet and reserved in class on campus, not offering many comments or encouraging conversations, so I did not get to know him in those first weeks. I sensedthat not many others knew him well either, as he sat alone in class, often opening his briefcase and working behind the shield of the lid. He would spread out his books on other desks as if to ensure that no one could sit near him. As the days at McKernan proceeded, I began to notice him more--his comments and work during the "appearance and reality" planning sessions, and his comments in the staff room after working with his groups in Florence's and Don's classes. He had been perhaps a bit abrupt with his classmates at first, and as I listened to his comments after classes, I sensed some frustration with his McKernan students. He seemed to be arguing with himself sometimes.

During a USSR (uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading) period, Dave sat in the staff room absorbed in a science fiction novel. After reading time ended, I started a conversation with him as a fellow science fiction fan. He spoke of his love of science fiction and fantasy, commenting sadly, "Too bad we can't teach it in class."

"Why not?" I was puzzled.

He answered that students were required to read "classic" literature. He had divided literature into categories of "educational reading" and "the rest," which meant anything he enjoyed. He acknowledged that after years in high school and university reading only required works, he had recently returned to reading for pleasure. He wanted to help children begin to read what interests them but worried about "the test," which he saw as essential: "How else can you get a mark?" I spoke with him about other ways to "get marks" for students' reading of literature--projects, journals, and other ways which I knew had been discussed in his class and his textbooks. They had not penetrated his assumptions, which were built upon experience.

The following day Dave approached me in the staff room to report a conversation he had just had with a student in the hallway. The student, spotting Dave's science fiction novel, had said, "I thought you're supposed to stop reading that kind of stuff after high school." Dave had assured him, "No, I still read sci fi; I really like it." In telling me about his encounter, Dave sounded surprised that the student could have had such an idea. It sounded to me as though the student only repeated Dave's comments of the preceding day: there are books for fun and books for learning, and never the 'twain shall meet. The presence of Dave's science fiction novel during USSR time caused two chance encounters which led him to reconsider what literature can and should be brought into classrooms.

Dave began to join informal staff room conversations that pertained to literature. As two education students talked with Marg about the possibilities or limitations of readers and writers workshops in high schools, where fear of provincial exams often rules curricular decisions, Dave joined the group with questions about literary terminology: how much literary terminology is on the exam? Don't kids need it? Marg spoke about using personal response as a way into relevant and appropriate literary terminology. She suggested ways to structure reading and writing workshops in high schools, and she told them about the abilities that students need to succeed in the diploma exams.

As his work at McKernan continued, Dave re-examined not only his assumptions about teaching literature but his entire view of his relationships as a teacher with students. The two issues coincided, and he recognized the importance of the talk surrounding him as an impetus for thought:

> A lot of things I learned come from the staff room, talking with people like you and Marg, and from the kids. Not even answering questions, but forcing me to just ask the questions, bringing them to my attention. Like the kid who said, "Aren't you supposed to stop reading this stuff [science fiction]?" I never even thought about it before; I just assumed that everybody has this line--personal and academic reading--separated, you know. When he said, "You're supposed to stop reading this," it made me stop and think about this--does it have to be divided? . . . He didn't know what I read at home, or whether I read at home. . . . It's the whole teacher image, the perception that teachers don't really lead another life. . . . I make it a point now to have my [science fiction] book handy, so even if I reach for a pen, it shows that I have this book. So they can see that I'm reading other things besides King Lear.

Dave began to explore ideas with his students, using them as resources. A grade 9 student who saw Dave's science fiction book talked about his enjoyment of Steven King novels. Though Dave was not a King fan, they discussed the appeal of those novels. Dave also learned about the boy's initiative in reading classics:

> He read A Tale of Two Cities on his own. I asked if he had trouble with understanding the language, and he said, "Yeah." He thought that when you read classics you should have groups to talk about it with, to get help.

Dave suggested groups of four or five students reading the same novel and talking about it. He spoke of providing diversity for students to help them find literature that appealed to them as well as providing support for reading and understanding the literature. He thought that after having several groups reading novels,

> . . .maybe at the end you can get them together and talk about structures and plot lines and stuff. The point that I'm really trying to get into my own head is they've got to be interested; you can't stuff literature down people's throats. That's the way it

> was when I went to school. They told us what we were going to read and what we would get out of it. Our opinions didn't matter at all, not even at university. The one or two books I liked in class, I'd write all my essays and midterm on them if I could.

Dave was connecting his own experience with the students he was teaching at McKernan. He spoke frankly of his difficulty with his "appearance and reality" group in one of Florence's grade 9 classes, of his annoyance with the students' recalcitrance in the beginning, and of their change in attitude when the work became interesting for them. When he assigned the project, the students found an appealing approach to it and began to work with enthusiasm:

> The turn-around once they started working on stuff that interested them was amazing. So about literature, if they can be reading literature that interests them, the quality of their work . . . is going to be dramatically higher.

More fundamental than his development in understanding teaching literature was Dave's development in his attitude toward teaching his students. He spoke of this development in terms of a metaphor: he had constructed a wall around himself. He spoke of this on several occasions with me and wrote a poem entitled "The Wall" for his portfolio. In speaking of the wall surrounding himself, he acknowledged that it was constructed against his colleagues as well as his students. He first spoke of it in relating his difficulties with the "appearance and reality" group:

> I was really running into a wall. It wasn't the fact that THEY had walls around them--it was MY wall. I was trying to jump over my wall, take down theirs, and jump back over mine. That doesn't work, but I didn't get that impression until the third class. . . . I was sort of holding them at a distance of a ten-foot pole. I wanted them "out there." One of them--Robby, the troublesome one who spurred on the others--asked me my name, what was he supposed to call me? For some odd reason, I had made a demand that they call me Mr. [X]. When I got home I thought, "How stupid, why did I do that?" The idea of these two walls coming up was I'm trying to get them to share something, to express

> themselves, give me something of themselves, but I'm not sharing anything about me.

In that third class period, Dave's group began working on their projects. When, as Dave noted, the work interested the students, their work improved dramatically, and everyone's spirits improved, most of all Dave's, by the sound of it. Dave began to talk and respond to the students on a more personal level, appreciating their different working styles, their different interests.

Looking back to his earlier student teaching, Dave mentioned having already done one round of phase III teaching, which had not worked out well. He recalled his cooperating teacher from that practicum saying, "'Don't trust kids because they'll f*** you every time.' I thought that was wrong, that if you tell them something about yourself, it would help." He spoke of "the wall" in that practicum:

> I used to hide behind the podium, behind this big wall. Here's me and the chalkboard, and there's this huge brick wall in front of me. And every now and again, I'd jump over the wall and say, "Did you get that, kids, get that?" and then jump back again. And then when I jump over, I see all these little castles, instead of desks, and see all these students hiding there in the castles. Some of them are ready to open up; you want to give them a little nudge and their walls would fall. But I can't even get over my wall to go and knock theirs down.

As Dave spoke of his growing awareness of his "walls," he mentioned the importance of a conversation he had with a friend and a realization about the connection between his attitude and his work with adolescents on probation. He was complaining to a friend about Robby and Robby's bad attitude:

> ". . . if he doesn't want to do the work, he fails, it's not my problem." And [the friend] said, "And you're giving him so much incentive, too." And I thought, "No, I'm not." I started thinking, what am I doing here? Just sit on my ivory throne and issue marks. That conversation made me think, especially

> with the 9Bs, what works with them, where does the problem lie? I've done work with kids on probation, and their attitude is that it's not their problem; the problem is that the cops caught them. That's like me here. [The students] are not here for me, I'm here for them. I'm moving my centre, it's not there yet but it's moving.

Dave realized that helping students to bring down their walls meant taking his own walls down first. He was thinking of ways to reach out:

> I'm more aware of what it takes to bring down the students' walls. Like this one kid I'm having trouble with, I found out he's a guitar player. I started thinking, "What can I do to get through to him?" I had something to interest him today. Before I would have just written him off--he's a failure, a drug user, bad home, whatever--but I'm not doing that any more. I'm thinking, "What can I do to get through to this kid?" And I'm starting to realize that not everything works with each kid. I can't come up with a blanket magic solution. I'm trying to address problems on a singular basis. . . . I can adjust my teaching style, instead of keeping one style that just grazes over everyone. I can keep my philosophy and use different styles. . . . When I wrote about what I wanted to get out of these courses at the beginning [of the term], I wrote I wanted better organization and planning skills. I don't want that! I can do that. That's not the important part of teaching. It's not having every answer; it's getting through to the kids.

While working to deconstruct his wall, Dave remained conscious of a line between his students and himself: "There's still a line, but it's not three-feet wide. Each day it moves a little; I'm breaking down the wall a little at a time.

As we talked about his changing thinking, Dave tracked some key incidents in his progress. He recalled the plan for the education students working with "appearance and reality" to read a short story aloud to their students. Dave was corralled by Robin to read the only male role, that of a dying teenager, despite his resistance. Robin had stressed that he ought to read the role dramatically, and Dave had been extremely nervous. He said that his heart had pounded and he had feared the students' laughter. He also realized, though, that "maybe if I did [a good job] it would help the kids open up. Those were the kids [the 9B group] that I wanted to keep distance from at that time." He felt that the reading had gone well. Dave had also begun to find that his students were a good source of assistance as he thought through his concerns:

> I was trying to write some ideas about selection of literature for my portfolio. I had read the books but I was stuck, so I said to Scott [a student], "What do you think about this?" He talked to me on more than a student to teacher level. Scott was sort of hesitant about talking at first, but then he saw me write down something he said. He saw that I wasn't just trying to trick him into something, but that I wanted to know his ideas; he opened up more.

I noted that he had come a long way from "Call me Mr. [X]" to seeking out a student's opinion to help him think about his university assignments. Dave talked about the experience at McKernan as "changing my attitude to teaching" more than his previous student teaching experiences, where he had not had encouragement from cooperating teachers to be more open in his approach to students. Dave spoke of the importance of his impending practicum for his development. He was excited to hear that his cooperating teacher used a workshop approach, which he felt would help him focus upon individual students and not "hide behind the podium" again.

The Culture of the McKernan Project

As the two weeks of work at McKernan School neared completion, the education students marked the occasion with celebrations of their work and learning. They invited the staff of McKernan to a social gathering after school to express their appreciation for the opportunity to have worked with the teachers and school children. On the last day at McKernan, gifts were exchanged between Marg and her class.

One of the goals of my research is to evoke the culture created by the participants in the McKernan project. The preceding pages have detailed that creation of that culture, which, though brief in creation, seemed vibrant and pervasive. Despite the impossibility of summing up a culture in a few words, some of the more obvious characteristics can be cited easily.

The culture created by Marg, the education students, and the McKernan teachers and administrators was a professional culture viewed explicitly as a community which included equally the university professor, school teachers and staff, and education students. Though junior in experience, the education students were made to feel respected and appreciated for their professional qualities and ideas.

A professional community of Marg, the McKernan teachers, and the McKernan administrators pre-dated the arrival of the education students, so in some respects, the education students were initiated into a culture. By participating and weaving their own threads into the "webs of significance" of the professional community at McKernan School, however, they also contributed to the fashioning of the culture, enlarging and renewing the teachers' visions of possibilities. For example, neither Marg nor Don Garry planned the extension of writers workshop that resulted in Don becoming instrumental in teaching education students about the writing process and writing instruction.

This professional community had explicit values which permeated the actions and talk of those involved. One such value was respect for and enjoyment of children and colleagues as unique and capable individuals. Another accepted value was language use as a support for and extension of thought; talking, reading, and writing were seen as integral to learning. The community valued lifelong learning, which involves risktaking and openness to people and ideas.

The community believed in sharing resources and saw resources as human and material. This belief was modelled by the university and school teachers and was echoed repeatedly by the education students, who commonly exclaimed that they were beginning to see everything and everyone as resources for their teaching. By seeing friends and past experiences as resources, education students assisted the integration of their individual selves with their roles as teachers.

As the education students left McKernan School and their classmates and professor to begin their final practicum, I wondered whether this culture would sustain them through the pressures of practicum. One test of a culture, of a supportive community, is whether it sustains in other cultures, whether it "sticks." Would they find congruity or dissonance among the values learned in their curriculum-and-instruction courses and at McKernan School? Having been socialized into a supportive professional community, would they find extensions of that community during practicum or be socialized into the traditional isolation of teaching? As the education students became student teachers, and I began to hear their voices during student teaching, I was better able to understand the influence of the culture they participated in creating at McKernan School.

CHAPTER 7

VOICES FROM STUDENT TEACHING

Callbacks, Synthesis, and Observations

The education students had two callbacks during the eight-week practicum, the first after three weeks of teaching and the second after six weeks. For the callbacks, students returned to the university to reflect on their work with teachers and students. Callbacks are notoriously difficult for curriculum-and-instruction professors to structure, as the student teachers often need to recount their experiences--the successes and the nightmares--but are not always able to achieve enough distance to reflect upon the experiences meaningfully. Marg structured the first callback to begin with writing time to help them focus in upon their student teaching as part of the larger context of their learning; they were to write about the congruence or lack of congruence they were finding among the readings, experiences at McKernan, and experiences in student teaching. Students also were provided with two index cards for noting areas that were going well as well as concerns or problems, so that Marg and the class could address these issues in the discussion time. The writing time was followed by an oral sharing, where students could highlight their experience for the group. In the second callback, business matters were dealt with first, such as returning assignments to the education students, discussing the requirements for the final assignment, and setting the agenda for the post-practicum sessions. Afterward, students worked in groups to read and discuss writing of their practicum students; each student had been responsible for bringing several papers he or she was marking. Time was also allotted for individuals to see Marg concerning any particular situation needing attention or discussion.

In the first callback, many education students were in a fairly emotional, excitable state as they struggled to find their feet in their student teaching situations; by the second callback, most had made whatever adjustments they needed or felt obliged to make. As they spoke of their experiences and situations within schools and with cooperating teachers, they noted that they ought not to generalize from their singular situations, an observation that Marg reinforced as she highlighted the importance of callbacks for reminding us that individual people and schools work in different ways.

In the callbacks, the education students reported many of the usual successes and concerns of student teachers. Some felt welcome and supported by their cooperating teachers; others felt unwelcome, unsupported, unrespected. Some were eased into the workload with consideration; others endured the "sink or swim" approach. Some had a certain amount of freedom to explore various methods of teaching language arts; others were told to hand out worksheets, avoid personal response and "creative" writing, and give a multiple-choice exam at the end of the unit. There was no "average" experience of the students in the class, nor can I discuss their experience "in general." In student teaching, there is no average or general, only the very individual and specific. The experiences of student teachers make a mockery of the concept of "average," like Garrison Keillor's joke about his fictional hometown of Lake Wobegon, where "all the children are above average."

In addition to the two callbacks during the practicum, the courses included two-and-one-half days of post-practicum callbacks; in these sessions, Marg encouraged the students through discussions and writing to bring their disparate learning from the term into a synthesis. The final class assignment was to write a "synthesis" in which students were to consider all the sources of their learning of the term--readings; discussions; writing (their own and others' work); experiences with teachers, students, and classmates at McKernan; experiences with teachers and students at their practicum schools--to formulate a thoughtful expression of their current understanding of teaching and learning language arts. In addition, topics such as teaching Shakespeare, making year plans, and interviewing for jobs were addressed. During these final days on campus, I participated in class discussions and interviewed members of the class--some individually and some in groups. I was somewhat concerned that my interviews would add a burden to their schedules, until several students commented that the interviews were helping them crystallize their ideas for the synthesis paper. By doing group interviews, I had inadvertently provided time for expressive talk, which the education students found helpful in their work.

Before the practicum began, I asked four students for permission to visit them during their practicum, to observe them teaching if they felt comfortable with that, or just to talk if they preferred. To avoid adding stress at the beginning of the practicum and to allow an option out of the visit if they later reconsidered it, I suggested that we wait to schedule a visit until after a callback. All agreed, three with enthusiasm ("Oh, yes! A friendly face in case they're mean to me," said Annette), but one student seemed ill-at-ease, agreeing out of politeness only, I thought. I backed away from this observation, asking her to see me at callback if she wanted to go ahead with a visit. At the first callback, she expressed concern to the class that she had not as yet done any teaching. She didn't speak to me about an observation, and I let the matter drop.

Annette, Dave, and Arlene, however, seemed happy to have someone see their work with their students; each approached me at callback to arrange a date. I had approached these particular students primarily because their work and thinking at McKernan had especially interested me. Annette seemed so alive to the possibilities of writing for personal discovery, so interested in exploring literary forms in her own beginning writing. Dave had had so much difficulty in deconstructing his "wall" between himself and his students and seemed to be making significant changes in his thinking. Arlene, who had seemed perhaps stand-offish in class at the beginning of the term, had begun to enjoy her classmates and the school children as the two weeks at McKernan progressed. Arlene spoke several times about her enjoyment of Gerry Bell, who was "so much herself--she's great with kids!" and she seemed increasingly able to be herself with her classmates and with the children.

Annette: Asking Questions about Writing

Annette's placement for student teaching was at an urban senior high school, teaching English 10, 20, and 23. [English 10 and 20 are academic-route courses for grades 10 and 11 students; English 23 is a general-route course for grade 11 students.] As we met at the school, I remarked that she seemed tired, and she spoke of her difficulties in keeping up with her marking load.

I sat in on Annette's English 10 class, where students worked in groups to help edit each other's short stories, using Annette's very specific editing sheet. In her cramped classroom, students were crowded together at clusters of small desks, leaving Annette little space between groups as she circulated through the classroom to work with students. I thought Annette seemed nervous about my presence in the classroom when she introduced me to the class. I would have liked to circulate among the groups too, but the room was so cramped that I did not.

When we talked after class, Annette sounded not only tired but a bit discouraged, too. She found herself opposed to the attitudes of several of the English teachers at her school regarding writing in various literary forms. She felt that their attitude was that junior high school was the place for "creative, fun" activities, and that senior high ought to be exclusively "content-oriented," by which they meant writing essays instead of short stories as preparation for the provincial diploma exams.

More than one teacher at her cooperating school told her that grade 10 students "cannot" write stories and questioned why she even wanted her high school students to try to write them. Relating these comments to me, with shock and indignation in her voice that "anyone would even ask such a question," Annette recalled the junior high students at McKernan who had written fine stories, pointing out the discrepancy between her knowledge that grade 9 children can write stories and the teachers' view that grade 10 children cannot. She also spoke of the differences she had seen in many students' writing when they worked in different genres; some students who had great trouble with essays wrote beautiful, imaginative stories: "It's amazing how they can all of a sudden use the English language so beautifully when they fail miserably writing essays!"

She also faced this issue with her cooperating teacher while planning her poetry unit for English 20 students. Annette wrote of her frustration in her journal:

> [The cooperating teacher] was horrified that I would actually expect the students to WRITE POETRY! Good God, as if there were no worse thing in life than writing poetry. She said I would basically have a discipline problem; students would not remain on task and would probably not do the task at all.
>
> How can you teach poetry without writing poems? How can you appreciate poetry and the effort that is

> put into creating a good poem if you've never written one yourself?

She and the cooperating teacher arrived at a compromise, whereby Annette's unit included more of the critical response that the cooperating teacher required but also provided for the students to write poetry, as Annette wanted. As Annette proceeded through the poetry and short story units with her classes, she found that, far from having discipline problems when students wrote creatively, she had enthusiastic students whose writing reflected their lives and who were attentive to and supportive of each other's work.

Success with her chosen methods left Annette more discouraged by the routine of her cooperating teacher's methods. Annette wrote at callback of her frustration with the compromise in her short story unit, which was heavily weighted in favour of the cooperating teacher's requirements:

> Basically, what I have to do is get them to read the short story and answer a list of questions. At the end of the unit, the kids must write an essay and an exam. I feel almost stifled by this tedious, unimaginative routine. It's a wonder my kids are not crawling up the walls! I guess they are accustomed to this style of teaching. Sometimes I have a poor attitude towards the entire concept of student teaching because many teachers want us to teach what they teach and in their style. As a result, very little discovery and learning takes place on our part.

Annette spoke of her work at McKernan as having helped her to understand and appreciate junior high school children and to see her senior high school students from a more developmental perspective. Both of her practica were in senior high schools, where the individual differences among students are perhaps more subtle, easier to ignore. In a junior high, however, the students are so "obviously different from each other--you'll have one little tiny kid who's still reading comic books and another who's six feet tall with a moustache!" I wondered what rebuttal she would have had for teachers who told her that grade 10 students "couldn't" write stories if she had not been among junior high writers. She shook her head sadly: "I would have believed them."

Dave: Taking Risks

Dave's practicum placement was at a suburban junior high school with a teacher who used a writers workshop approach with her classes. When I observed him teaching a grade 8 class near the end of the eight-week practicum, they were doing a unit on humour, focusing that day on the limerick. As the cooperating teacher led me to her classroom, she cautioned with a laugh that the class might be "zany, or zanier than usual today, because Dave's trying out a new seating arrangement." Dave had the desks in a horseshoe-shape, his attempt to help the students see and speak to one another in class discussions. As he later remarked, it was also his attempt to minimize their off-topic conversations:

> There are some advantages and disadvantages. This is a rowdy class; it's impossible to shut down their talking. . . . With this [the horseshoe of desks] they can keep it down a little, you know, not shout across the room at their friends.

Dave had been bothered by his lack of control in the groupwork in Florence's class at McKernan. When given more control in his practicum placement, however, I noticed that he responded by loosening the structure for his class, by acknowledging and working with their personalities.

The class began with a seven-minute continuation of their "joke pyramid," in which students told jokes which the class judged "thumbs up" or "thumbs down." The vote moved the student up or down on the class pyramid; students could challenge someone higher up on the pyramid to win a higher position. At the end of the unit, bonus marks would be awarded for each level of the pyramid. The students clearly enjoyed the exercise, volunteering for joke telling, responding to and enthusiastically judging the jokes and joke-telling skills of their peers. Dave later talked about the pyramid as a warm-up exercise, to encourage his students to speak up in class, to work on their delivery of jokes, and for the sheer fun of it: "No point doing a humour unit with no laughs."

Dave moved the class into the topic for the day, limericks, and was greeted with good-natured groans. After calling for a definition, he provided several examples that appealed to the grade 8 sense of humour. The class responded to Dave's examples with more "thumbs up" and "thumbs down," which he accepted with ease, jokingly complaining in a mock-student voice that they weren't being fair to him. He then wrote on the blackboard, "There once was a class of 8C," and together the class composed a limerick. Participation levels were high, and students were assisted in fixing lines with incorrect limerick scansion. After the group example was complete, Dave asked the class to compose limericks individually with the same opening line; at the end of class they would copy their limericks legibly and have a bulletin board display about their class. As the class worked, Dave circulated, helping individuals and keeping them on-task. Toward the end of the period, volunteers read several limericks aloud; I read mine, too.

Afterward, as we talked, I couldn't help but tell Dave my impression that he had come a long way in the short time that I had known him. He not only had taken down his "wall," he seemed relaxed, enjoying his students, and focusing upon them rather than himself. He agreed, speaking of the gradual transitions that provided support for his development. He was delighted with his practicum placement, praising the cooperating teacher, who had provided smooth, natural transitions for his induction into her classroom. He appreciated her confidence in him and her willingness to give him freedom.

He saw his time at McKernan as part of a transition,

> a testing ground, not for lesson plans, but for the person. At McKernan we were able to try out different things, for example, what is the difference in effect between introducing yourself to kids by your first name or by your last name? [He had introduced himself by his first name in Don's class and by his last name in Florence's class.] . . . It was more of a lead in. One thing that was really important for helping me to open up there was when we did our group reading of "On the Sidewalk, Bleeding." The women [in the "appearance and reality" planning group] convinced me that I should read the boy's thoughts, that it would be better if a male read the male part. I was really nervous about it--I'm not a dramatic kind of guy. But it worked out really well.

I asked whether he felt that the work at McKernan, the risks like the group reading, had made a difference in the risks he was taking in student teaching. His response revealed some of the calculation that must be part of the student teacher's decision making even in the simplest matters:

> I would be at least two weeks behind myself, if I was doing any of this stuff at all--I don't think I would be. The "two weeks" was a really important part of it. You know you're not going to do any damage in two weeks, or make any real difference. The kids might remember you if they really like you or really dislike you, but you won't do any real damage. So you can be willing to try things out. I don't mean that to sound like everyone is only concerned for the kids, either, because I think you think of yourself too, of not looking like a fool and messing things up badly. But in two weeks, you'll be gone from the school, so if you did mess up, it won't follow you everywhere. Here [in the practicum placement], if I think that I could mess up in the first week and then have to live with it for seven more weeks, it would make me much more cautious about trying things out. I probably wouldn't do anything too risky.

Having recalled the group-reading activity as risky at McKernan, Dave laughed proudly at some of the risks he took during his practicum:

> One of the real turn-arounds here was my Halloween costume--I was a real punker! And I was nervous about it--what if no one else wears a costume, and all--but the kids are still talking about it. I won two contests! The thing is that my not being afraid of looking stupid makes the kids take some chances, too. They open up more. The Halloween costume and also just joking informally with the kids when they come in--that helps a lot too.

Dave was still thinking about literature in the classroom, and working with the structure of a readers workshop in his practicum had helped him to think about and respond to his students' interests and development in literary appreciation. In responding to his students' reading journal entries, Dave appreciated the need to know his students in order to frame useful responses for them. He remembered Nancie Atwell's metaphor of the dining room table conversations, noting that such responses among friends are more frank, less open to misunderstanding. Through reading journals, he had found a path to guide students from the formula "Sweet Valley High" series to more challenging literature. In thinking about his own love of science fiction, he knew the appeal of the formula books, and he knew that within any genre there is literature of a wide range of complexity, literary merit, and appeal. As readers, we respond to formulas, but as a teacher he could begin to see how to work with students in developing broader literary tastes rather than to focus more narrowly on classics versus popular literature.

I thought again about the importance of a student teacher's placement. Dave was, in the cliche, blooming, in his student teaching. But, as he said, the McKernan work seemed to bring him to a point where he could benefit from the freedom and confidence that his cooperating teacher offered.

Working in small groups at McKernan, Dave found a situation that was conducive to his learning, conducive to helping him change his attitude in a fundamental way. He recalled his initial anger at a student in his "appearance and reality" group and his subsequent realization that students are not making a personal attack when they resist a teacher's lesson plans:

> It was hard for me to open up to these kids, but in McKernan what you find out about while working in the little groups is that it doesn't kill you to tell them about you. They are not going to pin you to a wall and crucify you because of something that you've said. . . . You know what helped me a lot at McKernan was that kid Robby because the first day that I had him he wrote "This is stupid. Why do we have to do this?" and you saw me after in the staffroom. . . . I really hated it. I was down on myself because I took it personally, because in our group I was the one who suggested that idea [for that day's activities], and I know that it worked for everybody else's group, but it didn't work for mine. I was just offended . . . because it didn't work and I was taking it as a personal insult. . . . That incident at McKernan with Robby really drew the line there. Just because your ideas fail, and your activities don't succeed, your unit plans flop, [that] is not a reflection on you; it is simply an indication that you have to try something different. It doesn't mean that you are a failure as a teacher; it doesn't mean that you are a failure as a person; it means it didn't work in this case and in some cases it will.

In speaking of the changes in his attitudes, Dave framed his experience in terms of his first attempt at a phase III practicum, which had ended in withdrawal two years earlier. Having begun the practicum enthusiastic about the language-for-learning philosophy and workshop approach he had studied in his curriculum-and-instruction courses, he found those ideas scorned and dismissed at his practicum placement. He felt that his cooperating teacher expected him to mimic her, and he resented her dismissal of his ideas. While acknowledging his own responsibility for the outcome of that episode, Dave noted that he had begun this term with "a bad attitude:"

> When we went out to McKernan I didn't have a very strong attitude. I thought, here we go again, the university spouting all of this theoretical gibberish, and we are going to get out here, and everyone is going to tell us that it is not going to work, and I'm going to have the same situation again.

If he had once again found the dissonance between the university and the school that had characterized his other practicum, he claimed that he would have given up on being a teacher. If he had been encouraged to mimic the school teachers, he would have refused to do so. To his relief, the McKernan teachers supported his university-based learning:

> I talked to teachers who believed in the same things that I did, for the first time, who said what we were doing at the university was a good thing. . . . I always had this idealized view of the university as where the future is. What is being done at the university is what's going to be the future of education. Having that first experience was really disappointing, because I suddenly realized that maybe it's not, it's an academic exercise with no purpose. But getting to McKernan and seeing that there is a different way of doing it, . . . doing good, and what I'm learning isn't going to be useless to me [has] really changed my attitude. I was able to approach [the practicum school] with a better attitude saying, "Hey, I know that it works, and I'm going to be in a placement where it is happening."

Dave highlighted his growing understanding of teaching by pointing out the changes in his unit plan from its first form to the revision. His initial unit plan was "a plan on paper, for a mark in a course." After teaching and learning more during the term, his revised unit plan was "a plan for teaching." While the first plan was "stretched to make it appear as though I had incorporated the five strands" [the five language 'strands' of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing, as discussed in the Alberta Curriculum Guide], he felt the second one truly was an integrated plan with purposeful activities. Revising his plan during student teaching taught Dave about keeping unit plans in perspective. Echoing his earlier comments at McKernan, Dave explained:

> I always thought that all I needed to be a good teacher was a good file of unit plans. I always thought that the first year of teaching is hard because you don't have your unit plans all ready yet. No way! . . . Someone can take a lesson plan and teach it as is, or they can use it as a resource. I see almost everything nowadays as a resource.

Arlene: Being Herself in the Classroom

Arlene's practicum placement was at a large urban high school. Though telling me immediately when we met that "This teaching gig is a lot harder than it looks. You can quote me on that!" Arlene looked and sounded energetic and, like Dave, quite relaxed with her cooperating teacher and her students.

Arlene's English 13 [a general-route course for grade 10 students] class, which I observed, was to write a review of a television show, movie, or play that they had seen. After beginning the class with a review of possible structures for the review and elements to be included, she allowed the students to begin writing. She circulated throughout the room, reading and commenting to students and answering their questions. I was impressed with Arlene's ease and humour with the class; she was clearly accepted and respected by the students.

In conversation after class, Arlene praised the school's English teachers, who had made her feel welcome and professional. She laughed about having an "advantage" of being a smoker, as she joined the other English teachers who smoked outside the building and "talked English." She was happy to be independent in planning for her classes, as her cooperating teacher initially worked on planning with her but gradually gave her more freedom.

Arlene, though she said that she found little carry-over from McKernan to her high school placement, noted that McKernan was valuable for helping her "get back to the mindset of teaching in a school;" she had completed her phase II practicum a year earlier and felt "really far away from language arts when I came back in September." She spoke of the transition from university to practicum:

> It was good to come in here with such a strong personality as Marg and spend some time in class and then go to McKernan and see it hands on. . . . All of that together made my experience [in the practicum] much better than it would have been if I hadn't had that experience at McKernan. . . .

Arlene spoke of developing a feeling of trust and respect for her classmates. She acknowledged her slowness to develop these feelings for other people, also noting that this term was the first time she had ever developed a social relationship with members of a university class. She felt part of a professional network with the class, just as she was enjoying being part of a professional group at her practicum school, and she doubted that this would have happened in six weeks of university lectures.

In her written and spoken comments at the first callback, Arlene had mentioned her difficulty establishing herself as the teacher in her classroom, noting that the problem was especially difficult in her English 13 class, where the students regarded student teachers as "less valid" than "real" teachers. She said she had started off badly and needed to reverse the dynamics that had been set in motion. She accepted responsibility for the difficulty, noting that the school and her cooperating teacher "applaud creativity and initiative." By the second callback, she was feeling quite positive about her success in establishing herself well, and certainly by the time of my observation, Arlene appeared as comfortable and "herself" in the classroom as many experienced teachers. Her focus upon Gerry Bell's "craziness and willingness to be herself" in her McKernan classroom was, I thought, perhaps a positive model for Arlene as she struggled through the issue for herself. Like Gerry, Arlene presented herself in the classroom as someone who is very creative and a little unconventional.

Arlene said of her experience at McKernan, "I didn't think I would like kids this much." Liking the kids at both McKernan and her practicum placement (and perhaps liking her education colleagues, too) helped her to be herself. She related the story of how she had inadvertently "revealed" more of herself to her students than she intended. One day in her classroom during student teaching, she stood on a chair to reach the top of the blackboard, not realizing that the back of her skirt was tucked into the top of her pantyhose--"so the class really saw me!" She noted that "before, I would have been devastated and really upset by this. But I laughed and said something silly, and we went on with the lesson." She certainly showed more aplomb than many experienced teachers would have.

Arlene found that the teachers in her practicum placement, whom she respected very much, were scornful of "this fancy workshop stuff" and portrayed personal response sarcastically and simplistically, as "'How do you f-e-e-e-l about this.'" Nevertheless, she was given much freedom to plan and teach as she wanted. Arlene, though hesitant about the effectiveness of journals with high school students, began doing journals with her students:

> My impression was, and this is my own fault for not being as strong in theory as I should have been, that this "fancy workshop business" works really well in junior high, across the board, but I [didn't] think you could get away with a lot of it at the [English] 30 level. But I did some of it in [English] 30 and 33 [grade 12 academic and general-route courses,

> respectively], and it worked really well. . . . I was quite shocked with the reaction of the 33s when I brought in the idea of doing journals because the majority of them were really excited about doing it. I thought that I was going to get trampled, that that would be it for me. Nobody [in the class] had ever done journals before. . . . It was my first time coordinating journals, so it was kind of like the blind leading the blind. All things considered, I think it was very successful, actually. They just loved it.

Arlene attributed the success of the journals to their conjunction with a viewers workshop that she planned and taught with these classes. She structured it to include viewing amateur and professional movies, as well as Buster Keaton's silent film The General and lessons in film theory.

The risks Arlene took in teaching, among teachers who did not use her basic approach but allowed her the freedom to try, were rewarded by her sense of partnership with her students as her practicum proceeded:

> . . . we became partners in language arts; we were all learning this together, with me just a step or two ahead of them sometimes. I really liked that feeling. . . . I don't think you lose anything by not being a spewer of knowledge. I would really rather have this rapport as a partner than as a coordinator.

Consonance

Some student teachers, to the envy of their colleagues, found a degree of consonance, personal and professional, between their practicum placements and their other experiences of the term. This consonance among readings and discussion with other members of their curriculum-and-instruction courses, learning from McKernan, and student teaching centred primarily upon the cooperating teachers who allowed them the freedom to develop their own styles in the classroom. For some of them, the cooperating teacher's professional support was part of the support they received from the school staff, particularly the English teachers, who made them feel a part of their community.

Meagan, who at McKernan had spoken with other education students about her shyness and dread of being singled out when she was a student, found her cooperating teacher to be especially sensitive to shy students:

> He had the kids go up and do a classroom presentation, and it was just on a personal anecdote, nothing really tremendous. So he asked the kids if there was anyone who felt really nervous about it. And there's this really shy girl. So he took her hand and took her up to the front of the class and put his arm around her and said, "You know, these are all your friends; you have nothing to worry about." And it really helped her--she was still nervous, but it really helped her. And from being that person, because I was in the same position when I was in high school, I would have just loved my teacher.

Betty, along with several others, reported that she felt like part of a team with her cooperating teacher. Together they discussed lesson planning and discipline problems, making joint decisions. Betty felt that she was treated not as a student, but as a teacher with less experience than her cooperating teacher. In her cooperating teacher's view, teachers are continual learners.

Kate found her cooperating teacher and the English teachers at the school to be a supportive community into which she was welcomed and encouraged to "jump in whenever I feel ready. I have no qualms about telling her when I'm ready." The teachers fill their workroom with communal resources and use the room as a meeting place. She commented that the "biggest link from McKernan to what I'm doing there is that sharing." Kate and her cooperating teacher were planning to team teach some lessons, which she was eager to do.

Curt was inspired by the comments of a guest speaker for a professional development day at his school. The speaker encouraged teachers to be comfortable with themselves as teachers and not try to imitate another teacher's style. Curt reported:

> He said, "Don't try to be like anybody else, and let the kids know that they can be like nobody else." And that really amazed me. If you can feel confident enough to say to a kid in your class, "Don't give me what somebody else will give me; give me what nobody else can give me," then I think that will really help the learning.

He likened this advice to his cooperating teacher's advice to establish his presence in the classroom. Curt felt that in his initial week of teaching, he had not established his true personality in the classroom, and the advice he received from these two people encouraged him to assert himself more openly in class.

Several student teachers whose practicum placements were in high schools noted with surprise that behaviourally, their grade 10 students were quite similar to the junior high students they met at McKernan. Sharon and Ursula both commented that the high energy levels of their grade 10 students were very similar to junior high students but that by grade 12 students' energy levels had considerably decreased. Their work at McKernan, they said, provided them with strategies for working with the high-energy students. Sharon found that learning was the same at the junior and senior high levels:

> If the lesson is interesting and good, you've got them; if it's not, you haven't. I don't think that that's different. Except that in grade 12, they give you more of a chance.

Workloads

Almost all the education students complained about their workloads, some jokingly and others in earnest. They spoke of the support or lack thereof from their cooperating teachers in preparing their lessons. Some, like Britt, who had heavy workloads, were coping fairly well because of their gradual introduction into the classroom. Britt was developing six teaching units, but she only began to teach in the third week. With two weeks' preparation and observation time, she managed to develop her units.

For Marlaine in particular, the workload was the major obstacle to her student teaching; without any real preparation time, she was required to create units for and teach _Lord of the Flies,_ _A Doll's House,_ _Tess of the D'Urbervilles,_ _Wuthering Heights,_ _A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,_ as well as taking over the cooperating teacher's unit on _Hamlet_ half-way through it. Marlaine understated her case when she spoke at the first callback:

> One difficulty I feel I'm having is the amount of material I have to cover. [Laughter from the class about Marg's aversion to the phrase "covering material"] But that's the terminology she uses, too--you have to get through this material. I'm finding I'm just staying above water level. I'm just one step ahead of the kids.

While I think it is an understatement to say that most student teachers, and many experienced teachers, would crumble under that load, Marlaine was managing to cope. She spoke of the importance for her of taking an hour each day to exercise to keep herself energetic and functioning. Complicating her situation was the fact that she had a regional placement, so she was operating without support from a university language arts faculty consultant.

Judy: Dissonance and the Question of Conformity

Other students, inevitably, found cooperating teachers and situations that were less in harmony with their needs and philosophies, less supportive of an integrated language arts program based upon our knowledge of language and learners. These education students discussed problem situations in professional terms, with no names or schools being mentioned, and often, with praise for the cooperating teacher's positive qualities, but the depth of their frustration was evident. Barbara, who understood from her own experience the importance of writing for learning, stated the dissonance succinctly:

> I don't ask for any personal response whatsoever. I give them worksheets on a novel. I don't ask them about the conflicts in their lives--but I ask them to label the conflicts in the books.

Judy's situation was altogether negative. She was required to begin each class with a joke, as "motivation" for students. Her cooperating teacher's approach in the classroom, according to Judy, was to

> . . . read Responding to Reading [a textbook], answer the questions at the end of the chapter. There's no choosing on the teacher's part--every story, every poem must be read in the order that it is in the book. No new questions, no original questions are asked. . . . Every Friday is spelling workbook. I am supposed to go over parts A and B, but never C.

Faced with her cooperating teacher's negative views on strategies that Judy wanted to introduce, she nevertheless opted to try her ideas in class:

> I'm beginning my unit ten-to-fifteen minutes per day with choral reading. He told me it's not going to work because it's too elementary. Then the next day he told me he didn't know what choral reading was. . . . The university has taught me about motivation, but not like this [the joke at the beginning of each class]. In my opinion, my choral reading work, having fun with words, should be a good motivation for this unit. . . . What I do has got to make sense to me. For pete's sake, this is my phase III--I have learned some things.

Fortunately, Judy was succeeding with her students when she tried her own strategies. The friction between her and her cooperating teacher brought her some satisfaction when her opinions were validated in the classroom. She recounted their disagreement about Judy's strategy of flickering the lights to get students' attention at the beginning of class; the cooperating teacher, arguing that this strategy was "too elementary and would offend junior high students," required Judy to have the students vote on a procedure they would find acceptable. The class voted in favour of flickering the lights, affirming Judy's initial suggestion. This validation of her beliefs about choral reading and management strategies convinced her that "language arts can be so good. Why would I want to compromise and do it any other way?"

In her regional placement, Judy did not have the possibility of support from a language arts faculty consultant, as regional placements use school or district administrators as faculty consultants. Judy recognized the problem she would face when her district superintendent, acting not only as her faculty consultant but also as an administrator in charge of hiring personnel, would observe her teaching: "Can I tell him that these are things my cooperating teacher requires me to do, and that they are not things I would choose to do?"

Judy's dilemma struck a chord with other education students who felt required to conform to a cooperating teacher's methods when the underlying philosophy conflicted with their own. The question for the student teacher, mindful of the need for a positive evaluation, is, "How much conformity is needed?" Several student teachers spoke in terms of conforming in practice while keeping other possibilities alive in their heads and journals for their later, "real" teaching.

Michael reported that his cooperating teacher's first piece of advice to him was the time-honoured "forget everything you learned at the university." Several other student teachers nodded in agreement that they had heard the same advice. Marg pointed out the contradiction implicit in this advice when one's "university" work was done in part in a school. If McKernan counted as the university, must it relinquish its claim to being part of "the real world" of schools? The conventionally-viewed university-school, theory-practice split does not hold true when the university and school learning merge, but Michael had not challenged his cooperating teacher on this point.

Ruth was struck by the discrepancy between what she had come to believe about teaching language arts and what her cooperating teacher saw as the reality of preparing students for diploma exams. She saw students whose skills in language were poor, and she knew that if they were her own students, she would begin to help them by using expressive language to lead toward more public communication skills. However, her teacher and school focused upon the final exam in isolation from real use of language. Ruth did as she was required to do but kept part of herself focused upon the future by writing in her journal about what she would do differently in her own classes.

The education students discussed the intricacies of the degree of conformity that might or might not be required in their student teaching. Judy and Annette explained that they simply would not abandon their beliefs altogether, even for eight weeks, while another student cautioned against rebellion. She argued that her particular cooperating teacher, she was sure, would punish a student teacher in her evaluation for any rebellion. Marg expanded upon Judy's question about the advisability of telling an evaluator that she was only conforming to the requirements of the cooperating teacher. Marg reminded them that their evaluations, so important for jobs, ought to be an indication of themselves as teachers; they would be letting themselves in for much trouble if, on the basis of their evaluations, they were hired to "be" their cooperating teachers:

> If you are hired because that form says you are a disciplinarian, and the school board wants a disciplinarian, then maybe you've been turned down by another school board that wants teachers who are more like the kind of teacher you really are, or want to be.

She reminded them that they had other sources of evaluations to provide another voice if a severe conflict existed between their style and beliefs and those of the cooperating teacher. They could have evaluations from her, from the McKernan teachers who knew them well, or from me.

Marg also reminded students of the danger of walking around in someone else's style: it may become comfortable or it may become the only style they know. She acknowledged the difficulty of this conflict but refused to simplify it as some of the education students were inclined to do, into a matter of "jumping hoops" for a little while. She acknowledged that student teachers may need to conform to some uncomfortable practices, but reminded them to remember and judge the costs of undue conformity.

Robin: Negative and Positive Models

Other problems of dissonance between what the education students had learned and what they saw in their practicum placements provided some vivid lessons for the future. Robin, whose practicum placement was causing great anxiety as she struggled to conform to her cooperating teacher's practices, was fortunate enough to work with another teacher as well. Robin's experiences were the stuff of student teachers' nightmares:

> My cooperating teacher looked at [a paper from a student] and said, "This is garbage." She threw it in the garbage and said, "Do it again. If it's not in by the end of the day, it's minus ten." Later on that day, she wrote something on the board on outlining. I knew how to outline, and I was sitting in the back of the room, and she said "Ms. [X]!" and every kid in the class turned around and looked at me, and she said, "You take this down, too." It really unnerved me, and I just went, "Okay." I opened up my book, and I was shaking like a leaf, and the kids are like snickering and everything, and I thought, "Oh my God, why did she do that to me?"

Robin's teaching involved several students who were hearing-impaired, one of whom had an experience that left its mark on Robin, as she urged her education student colleagues to treat impaired students as they would treat other students. She recounted that this particular hearing-impaired boy had a transmitter; if the teacher wore the transmitter, the boy could hear most of what was said. However, being painfully shy and nervous, the boy did not volunteer the transmitter unless teachers specifically requested it. Robin's cooperating teacher, who also taught drama, did not use the transmitter:

> In drama, in any class, you really need that transmitter because there are people moving and he can't focus on the teacher's lips at all times. So we were sitting in a large circle and he was watching what was going on. They were going from person to person--it was a large group of about 30--and he missed out on everything that was going on. Finally, it came to him, and he just broke down and said something silly because he didn't know what was going on. Everyone laughed, including the teacher, and it just hit me really bad, and at the end of the class he was wiping away tears, and with good reason. I was wiping tears away with good reason, and I just want to say that you have to treat them like everyone else even with the difficulties that they have. If another kid would say something silly and didn't understand what was going on, I'm sure she would have stopped and said something.

Fortunately for Robin, she also observed the school's special education teacher and began to work with her. She sat in on the special education teacher's class with eight deaf children who were reading and writing anywhere from a grade 2 to grade 9 level. The teacher was using a reading and writing workshop approach, in which the students signed their work and the teacher transcribed it.

> I felt scared to death talking to these people because I've never had to talk to anyone who was deaf. It was a really interesting experience for me. [The special education teacher] is helping me out a lot. I'm working together with her and part of my class. Her kids are coming in and mine are going to learn sign language, as part of our communication unit. It's

> wonderful. She's a great teacher and she's my inspiration.

Consonance and Dissonance in Writers Workshops

Edith found that the writers workshop that she saw working well at McKernan was also working well in her high school placement. At her arrival, the cooperating teacher was just finishing a six-week writers workshop; during her first week, the students were sharing their work with their classmates:

> One girl read a poem about having to put her cat to sleep. It had the whole class in tears, football players and all. Another girl read out this letter that was just a burst of raw emotion towards her mother who mistreated her, and this other kid read out a piece about his grandmother finding out she had cancer. So this was all in one class, and we were all in tears the whole class. I went home and just slept for four hours, I was so exhausted. But the really great thing was that I expected, just because when I was in high school if that had happened there would have been snickers from at least two or three people, and there wasn't one. I was amazed; everybody would say, "I like it," or they'd say, "Oh, that was really good, and you did this and this." And even for the pieces that were so emotionally disturbing, they said, "I really like what you did, it's really powerful, but maybe you could try this. . . ." And nobody got offended.

Some of the education students who had been told by cooperating teachers that writers workshop was acceptable at a junior high level but not viable at a high school level listened attentively as Edith recounted this story. Student teachers in high schools certainly received the message that writers workshop was not workable at the high school level more commonly than they heard or saw writers workshops at the senior level.

Lorraine, like Annette, was told emphatically by her cooperating teacher that grade 10 students "cannot" write. Early in the practicum, she called me at home one evening to ask for help with her planning; her cooperating teacher had warned her that her short story writing would not work because "'grade 10s cannot write more than one paragraph.'" Lorraine was in need of reassurance, which I provided by asking whether the grade 9 students at McKernan could write more than one paragraph. Lorraine couldn't understand the view of such limitations for older students, so I suggested that the types of writing assignments they had had in the past might perhaps provide some answers for her questions. She opted, with the cooperating teacher's permission, to go ahead with her writing assignment and journal work, which were part of a short-story unit. At callback, she reported happily that her students were "writing pages and pages--one boy wrote a ten-page story, and it's really good!" At the end of the term, she also reported that her cooperating teacher had indicated that she would continue with journal work and more writing:

> She said that she saw the amount of progress, and that I had become closer to them more quickly than teachers usually do; that the community really developed quickly and so she was going to continue.

Ironically, despite their own positive and powerful experiences with writing and conferencing for their portfolios, several student teachers accepted their cooperating teachers' views of the limitations of writers workshop. Several others, who had student taught in junior high schools, also believed this view. As I interviewed students at the end of the term, several discussed these limitations, until, after a few minutes, I could not help but intervene to point out the glaring inconsistency:

> **Jill:** Wait a minute, I'm confused. You're saying that junior high students do well in a writers workshop approach, but senior high students do not?
> **Christine:** Yeah, maybe the senior high students are too set in their ways.
> **Jill:** Did you find the writers workshop approach helpful to you in your writing, for the portfolio?
> **Christine:** Oh yes, it was great! I'm really writing now, like I never did before. It helps me to show my stuff to people and have conferences and talk. I can

> sort it out better and go back to it and make a better draft.
> **Jill:** So, what you're saying is that writers workshop is useful for junior high kids and useful for university students, but not useful for high school students?
> **Christine:** [pause] I hadn't thought about it like that before. That doesn't make sense, does it?

Afterward, as I thought about this incident and its implications, I was struck again at the power of teachers in the school culture to dispense ideas without challenge. The direct experience of Christine and several other education students contradicted their cooperating teachers' views, and yet those teachers almost had the final word. These education students were willing to believe the teachers to whom they had been "apprenticed," which is certainly not the view that the university takes of student teaching, but it seemed to be in fact the role adopted by the student teachers in this matter. The teachers and students at McKernan whom they saw engaged in writers workshops and the experience the education students had with their own writing somehow did not counterbalance the wisdom of the cooperating teacher. For the student teachers who were able to question the view of the their cooperating teachers, like Lorraine or Annette, their experiences in student teaching confirmed their view, developed through reading, through their own writing, and through their work at McKernan, of students as potential and actual writers.

Michael: Facing Contradictions

Michael's student teaching placement was at a junior high school, where he was struck by the disparity between the socio-economic status of his students and those he had met at McKernan. He found the two schools worlds apart, as his school lacked parental support and involvement, and his students had a high absentee rate due to apathy and a low-priority given to schooling: "I saw two totally different schools. I saw a school where kids wanted to learn and I saw a school where kids had to come to school. There was a whole different set of objectives." Nevertheless, he found that teaching methodology transcended these differences; his students, given the opportunity and encouragement to write, did so:

> What I found interesting was that the methods that were used at McKernan also worked with the kids at [the practicum school] because it allowed them to express themselves and they were expressive kids. I found that the kids at McKernan often times . . . knew almost what the teacher wanted and they wanted to do the project almost because of that reason. But the kids at [the other school] just write to express themselves and I found that worked for them too because it allowed them to have the freedom to express themselves and learn things in their own way.

Michael, however, was having trouble finding consonance among his various experiences. During the term, Marg and I had become convinced that Michael was not keeping a journal despite her assignment of journal writing. Since the journals were ungraded and students were not required to hand them in for comments, Michael was under no penalty if he chose not to keep a journal. But, while several other students in the class who chose not to hand in their journals for comments were clearly keeping journals, Michael showed no evidence of doing so. In interviews at the end of the term, Michael discussed the issue. He noted that, as a drama student, he had been assigned on many occasions to keep journals, but he found the practice difficult to sustain:

> My problem is that I don't like writing in journals. I understand that when I do write, I'm clearing things up in my mind and everything, I can see it working, but I just don't continue to do it, I don't know, I just don't like it. . . . I don't know what it is--if it's just the time of putting it down on paper or working it out on paper, I don't know.

When forced to hand in a journal, Michael said that he invariably made up the entries the night before the work was due. However, he professed to believe that for many people, journals are useful and productive, so he felt somewhat "guilty" for not including journal work in his classes. In conversation with his classmates, he found many people who sang the praises of journal writing. Students were writing journals at his practicum placement. He tried to find a halfway ground:

> Maybe If I could take the time and start writing myself and write a journal, then I would ask the kids to do it. I think I would start off really simply. "If you want to do them, please feel free. Here's why you could do them, there's why you should do them. If you don't want to, I know myself, I find it difficult to write in them." I would tell them the truth, . . . and [say] "Please feel free to give it to me and I will respond to it. If you don't want to write a journal, don't." I think that's how I might start. . . . I felt guilty getting their first journal response when I first came because the teacher had a journal going with them. . . . I felt guilty because I never did.

Michael was looking for ways to communicate with his students in writing, however. He spoke of asking a girl who did not speak or work in class to write him a letter:

> She wrote me three letters that were pretty much trash, just, "Hi, how are you, when are you leaving?" . . . I would always write her back; I wrote her a four-page letter telling her about my life, telling her this and that, why I'm in school. Finally I went up to her in the hall and said, "Look, you have to write me a good letter. I'm sharing things with you; I want you to share something with me." She gave me a three-page letter that told me about her life and her family. I felt good. That one thing that I got from her, I think that made my student teaching the best, was getting that one piece of work from this one girl.

For Michael, the work in writers workshop was problematic. His ambivalence showed as he discussed his work at McKernan, in which he did not see enough of the writing process in Stuart's class to judge its success. Recalling that he had only seen a few classes in early

September, Michael noted his approval of a workshop approach for allowing students freedom to write according to their interests and needs, but he questioned what he perceived as problems with editing and student motivation. All in all, he felt insecure about using a workshop approach and wanted "to work into it gradually." In an interview with a school board personnel officer, Michael had been asked whether he would feel comfortable starting a writers workshop, and he replied that he would want to do so eventually. He couched his reply in terms of the students' comfort as well as his own, that the "shock" of a sudden introduction of a workshop approach would be too difficult for children. In speaking of his insecurities, Michael noted several times that his "knowledge base" was insufficient: "I would want to move in that direction slowly, so that I could build up my confidence and my abilities."

Synthesis

In their writings, discussions, and interviews during and after their student teaching experiences, the education students worked to make sense of their various learnings and to mold them into a coherent statement of philosophy of learning and teaching language arts. They succeeded, in varying degrees, in bringing together disparate and sometimes contradictory experiences. Several noted sadly that they had not had the opportunities to do and learn what they needed to during their student teaching.

Those student teachers who experienced reasonable congruity between their coursework, work at McKernan, and student teaching found confirmation that language is indeed important in learning, that students can and will learn well when the learning is structured to meet their needs, and that as teachers they can feel comfortable being in the classroom. Those who suffered severe incongruities between their student teaching and the rest of their learning during the term, such as Robin and Judy, found resolutions to the incongruities by using the negative examples as cautions for in later teaching. Those student teachers who introduced teaching strategies that their cooperating teachers did not use in class, such as journals and writers workshops, were for the most part successful, in their eyes, and were confirmed in their beliefs in the values of these strategies. For some, such as Lorraine, there was great satisfaction when the teachers acknowledged the success of these strategies and their intentions to continue using them in their own teaching.

PART III
PERSPECTIVES

Overview

In weaving, warp threads extend lengthwise in a loom, interlaced with weft threads which cross from side to side at right angles. The warp is usually twisted harder than the weft, and together, with suitable tension, they compose the piece of fabric, the web.

In considering the "webs of significance" of a project in teacher education, both warp and weft are essential to weave a fabric of depth and texture. If the narratives of education students and teachers at McKernan School are the warp, then the weft threads are those themes and issues that cross and interlace the narratives. Together, in a woven tapestry, warp and weft threads combine to achieve perspective.

Perspective is situated in relativity--of position, of magnitude, of distance, of proportion--and in mind, as the weaver or artist or writer struggles to re-present a scene as viewed from a particular vantage point. The visible scene, view, or prospect must be delineated so as to create the same impression for the viewer of the two-dimensional representation. The artist strives for evocation of the impression, for the original three-dimensional scene cannot be entirely and faithfully re-created in two dimensions. So, too, in writing of the creation of a culture, I attempt to evoke an impression of this culture, limited ultimately to one vantage point and two dimensions.

In Part III "Perspectives" my purpose is to weave the weft of this fabric, to provide texture and perspective to the narratives of Part II. In a study concerning human interactions, learning, and understandings, multiple rather than singular perspectives must be considered; this section will return to the literature of teacher education as well as include again the voices of education students and teachers to discuss the remaining two focal points of my research: How do the participants see their roles? What are they learning about learning and teaching English language arts?

Chapter 8 "Being a Teacher, Being an English Language Arts Teacher" includes an examination of the theme of personal growth in seeing oneself as a teacher as well as an exploration of the understanding of participants regarding the nature of learning and teaching English language arts. Chapter 9 "Teacher Education" explores issues and themes pertaining to the philosophy and organization of teacher education in terms of university and schools. Chapter 10 "Vistas" explores implications for teacher education and offers recommendations for further research from the perspectives gained by this research.

CHAPTER 8

BEING A TEACHER, BEING AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER

In some senses, the two questions "how do the participants see their roles" and "what do the participants learn about learning and teaching language arts" converge, for the ways we view our roles as teachers and/or students reveal our understanding of the nature of learning and teaching language arts. For the education students at McKernan School, as for those in my initial interviews, the development of their understanding of the meaning of "being a teacher" was the foundation upon which all other learning was based; it was, explicitly or implicitly, their primary concern. Until the foundation was strong and solid, nothing else of importance could be constructed, nothing else of importance was even considered.

Roles and Metaphors for Teaching

> It also seems probable that the most creative thinking occurs at the meeting places of disciplines. At the center of any tradition, it is easy to become blind to alternatives. At the edges, where lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world might be different.
>
> (Bateson, 1990, p.73)

At McKernan School, the education students were both students and teachers, yet they were neither. More importantly, they were not student teachers in the conventional sense of their subsequent practica. Such blurring of roles provided an ideal meeting place in which to think creatively about the roles of student and teacher, "to imagine that the world might be different." As with much creative thinking, metaphor became a common means of expression, as the language of understanding "being a teacher" was often expressed in metaphors.

Being "at the edges" and "in the middle"

In class at the university, Marg spoke of a purpose of taking her students to McKernan School as providing an opportunity to be "in the middle," in Nancie Atwell's phrase. Having read Atwell, the education students appreciated the sense of adolescents being "in the middle"--neither consistently children nor adults but "shuttling" back and forth. In the "adolescence" of their teaching lives, these education students experienced a similar conflict between wanting and needing to mature yet wanting desperately to avoid being the kind of "grown-up" teachers many had encountered as students. They sought ways to mature as teachers without relinquishing themselves, to place themselves closer to the teacher side of what they saw as the student-to-teacher continuum without sacrificing individuality or the best of their student natures. For some, the preceding phase II practicum had done little or nothing positive in helping them work through this dilemma, as they either had little teaching experience (such as one who reported having taught only three class periods during phase II) or were required to "be" the teacher without adequate transitional time or support.

Work with children and teachers at McKernan School, then, provided an opportunity to grow and develop comfortably, with support of peers and established teachers, without evaluation for teaching performance. From my initial interviews with students from the preceding class, I expected this class of education students to appreciate this "non-pressured" opportunity, to revel in their in-betweenness. Those initial-interview students, however, spoke to me after completion of student teaching. In retrospect, and in comparison to the greater pressures of student teaching, they saw their work at McKernan as non-pressured.

The education students with whom I went to McKernan did not have the advantage of that distance and perspective during their McKernan weeks. While "in the middle," they truly were in the middle psychologically, shuttling back and forth between feeling like students and teachers. Most achieved comfort in and a personal definition of their roles at varying times with the help of school children, teachers, and each other. For some, their development of comfortable, acceptable ideas of being the teacher came later, during student teaching; these people spoke of their McKernan work as providing support for their growth and allowing a gradual transition.

The experience of being "in the middle" was highlighted constantly in the terminology used to designate the education students. In the orientation session in the library, Don Garry welcomed the education students on behalf of his students with the comment, "They're looking forward to working with you as helpers and friends, not potential victims." In his discussions with the education students and his own grade 8s on the "sentence demon" project, he carefully referred to the "university partners," and his designation caught on among his students as well as among the education students. In that same library session Marg referred to them as "expert friends" for the children.

The designation of the education students was a matter for clarification for some younger students. A grade 7 student in Gerry Bell's class countered Gerry's introduction of the "university students" with the query, "Are they student teachers?" The grade 7 students were meeting the education students for the first time. Don and Florence's grade 8 and 9 students, however, had already worked with education students in the previous year or two; the overt question of definition was not as important for them as it was for the grade 7 students, or for the education students themselves.

With blurred roles of student, teacher, and student teacher, all decisions became meaningful signals of role understanding. Given the freedom to introduce themselves by first name or more formally with title and surname, the education students revealed their own self-images. Several, like Dave, introduced themselves by first name in one class and title and surname in another class to experiment with the ramifications of these choices. When her relationship with one group in Florence's class went sour for Kate, she spoke of being the "student teacher" in that class; however, she referred to herself as a "university partner" in Don's class (where she and the students were working well together).

Barbara: Being a student, becoming a teacher

For some education students, the choice between a "student-like" first-name introduction and a more formal, teacherly introduction was hardly a choice at all, so intimidated were they by the thought of being "the teacher." Barbara was an example of this extreme. She chose to be called by her first name, very much in accord with her view of herself as a student. She noted the advantages of this decision in terms of the McKernan students behaving naturally with her, as students to student. During her time at McKernan, she moved only slightly away from this student-orientation. Her writing work with Ashley ironically succeeded because she was so much a student, more interested in having some writing time for herself than in working with children. Afterward, however, she did consider some implications for teaching.

While Barbara used the time at McKernan to meet and work with students without worrying about the role and responsibilities of being the teacher, her student teaching experience, in which she had to assume the role, provided a shock for her:

> My role, I think, was different [in student teaching], because I had a huge sort of overwhelming fear--I was a teacher. I was Ms. [X] and I would go home and I would laugh at that. I mean, I wasn't used to being called Ms. [X] at all, and I just kind of smiled at it. I would say it in front of my sister, and we would laugh at it, and I would say it in front of my mom, and she would laugh at it because no one sees me as Ms. [X] because--that's just me. . . . I think that I stood up there in front of the class, and I had this conception of "The Teacher" and I presumed that role and I don't know why I did, because I did a lot of things that I . . . didn't appreciate about the teachers that I had. And I thought, "Oh God, I would never do the things that they have done." Things like snapping at a student for doing things that they might not have been noticing. . . . I mean, who likes to be talked to in that way, whether you are a student or a teacher? And I was just not being a human being. . . . I was something else rather than my own self, and I think that that's the biggest thing. . . . I grew academically and professionally, but the biggest growth was personally, because I just sort of had to fight with that conception of being their teacher and being Barbara, being two very divorced people, and it was hard being one or the other at that time. . . . [At McKernan] I was very relaxed, basically because we weren't under that pretense. We were just students, just like the students that we were with. But I think that it was a very, very important part of going to student teaching.

Barbara's understanding that the McKernan students behaved naturally with her because she was just a fellow student missed the underlying point, I think, that they behaved naturally with her because she was "natural" with herself. The extreme polarity of her views of herself as Barbara and as a teacher during student teaching made her adopt a fallback "teacher" persona, one she disliked intensely. Ironically, though Barbara perceived pressure to conform to her cooperating teacher's authoritarian (in Barbara's view) style, she noted with surprise that the cooperating teacher had complimented her for developing her own style in the classroom.

Eventually, however, she grew in her understanding and acceptance of a teacher role, using the springboard of her writing. Despite the cooperating teacher's disapproval of "creative" writing, Barbara introduced personal writing for her students. She shared her own writing with them and felt successful as a teacher and as a person for doing so. She attributed the success of this venture to the culture of writing created by Marg's writing portfolio assignment and Don Garry's writers workshop and conferencing: "Without the writing at McKernan, I would never have shared my writing with kids. My writing would have been just that--MY writing." For Barbara, who saw herself so much as a poet, the key to uniting her view of herself as a person and as a teacher was her writing. To the extent that she could share her writing with her students, she began to share herself.

Life "in the middle" with students

The confusion of existing in the middle of blurred role expectations initially caused problems for many education students. The staff room talk in the first week often centred upon the question of how much responsibility "university partners" ought to take for the productivity of their "sentence demon" groups. The fear that university partners would in fact be judged somehow on their groups' productivity and products caused education students anxiety. I suspected that the grade 8 students had discerned this anxiety and were consciously or unconsciously exploiting it, for it seemed that those education students (such as Ruth and Marlaine) who had a clear view of the limits of their ownership also had groups who worked productively.

A few education students, such as Lorraine, experienced a dichotomy between their student-oriented sympathies and their teacher-oriented thoughts. While her peers worried about discipline in their groups, Lorraine worried about disciplining herself:

> I found I had more trouble with myself [than with the group]. You're sitting there in the group saying, "Why doesn't everyone write three sentences in this exercise?" and I'm thinking, "These kids are not going to write three sentences. I wouldn't write three sentences if I were them. Why don't I just write the fifteen sentences myself? They're not going to do it." I've got this confusion between what I say and what I'm thinking.

For Lorraine, the time she spent "in the middle" provided an opportunity and ground to explore the question of "distance," which permeated most of her staff-room discussions that I heard. She wanted a reasonable and clear answer, a formula perhaps, to the question of how much distance a teacher ought to keep between self and students. For Lorraine at McKernan, the question opened up more when teacher and student role stereotypes did not apply, as she dealt with her student-self in her developing teacher-self: "They always tell you to keep some distance. Everything I've read and had profs tell me is 'Keep the distance,' but here everything is the reverse." She worried about whether to tell her students which pop singers she liked, for fear of seeming un-teacherly for liking Madonna. Then her fellow student Curt became an instant hero with his group when he mentioned having met Madonna once in Los Angeles. Luckily for Lorraine, she spoke of her confusion to Curt, who advised, "Don't try to be like them, but be part of their world. Sure, you like Madonna and so do they. But you don't like Madonna the way a thirteen-year old likes her." Curt's words were comforting, but the real confirmation was that Lorraine saw the results of Curt being himself and being "part of their world."

Though perhaps uncomfortable with the dilemmas of the blurred roles, education students also exploited the advantages of not being "the teacher," particularly the chance to talk with school students. Amanda felt that her freedom from teacher status allowed the school students more freedom to talk about their real concerns: "They can open up more and say things they wouldn't say to teachers, like about drugs. They talk more because I'm not a student teacher or teacher."

When the groups worked well and developed a real sense of partnership, the feeling was strong and positive for the education students. It was a feeling they wanted to experience in their teaching. Having structured a workshop approach in her student teaching, Arlene pronounced it a success when she and her students worked in partnership, as she had done at McKernan. She preferred being a partner to a "a spewer of knowledge," as she termed teacher-centred teaching.

Life "in the middle" for McKernan teachers

The McKernan staff appreciated the blurring of roles as a means for their students to learn to work well with adults in varying roles. Florence spoke of the "human" element of her students learning to work with other adults, the benefit of not attaching themselves solely to one teacher for expertise in a given subject area. Stuart also spoke of over-dependence upon the teacher, especially in September, when "teacher is always right." For teachers working in a workshop approach for writing instruction, the extra adults who work in the classroom as "expert friends" or "partners" help to reinforce the message that there are many audiences, and that the students are not writing solely for an audience of one teacher. As Don Garry noted, "The more readers for their work, the better."

For Don Vinge, the principal, the work of the education students with the McKernan students provided opportunities for the school students to interact in new ways. He saw the blurring of roles as one way to break down some of the negative perceptions that school children sometimes have toward student teachers:

> Our students look upon the university students as helpers, as competent helpers. I think that the environment in which they work, as compared to some of the practicum situations, probably results in a more effective relationship. . . . [P]articularly among the adolescents, substitute teachers and student teachers become an easy mark. Kids like to test them out to see . . . how far they can push, and they know where the power rests, and it's not with the student teacher. I wish that we had some way to assess the change in student attitudes towards student teachers as a result of this project. I'm going by staff comments and their personal feelings, but I think the respect and cooperation shown by students toward the practicum students will certainly be more positive each year.

The McKernan teachers, secure in their understandings of "being the teacher," also welcomed being "in the middle" of the education students and their own students. Gerry used the freedom from her conventional teaching role to observe her students as they worked with education students. She found this observation time especially valuable in September, when she was getting to know her class. Don concurred with Gerry in the value of these observations, as well as noting the benefits for himself in having writing conferences with adult writers.

Understanding self and others as teachers

By the end of their student teaching experiences, most of the education students, particularly those who had had support for individuality and initiative in the classroom, spoke of feeling comfortable in the teacher role. They regarded this growth as a primary achievement of student teaching and attributed the work at McKernan as, at the least, an important first step in the process. Many, like Dave and Arlene, asserted that their growth at McKernan enabled them to take full advantage of available opportunities during student teaching. The education students spoke positively about the different styles of teaching, different ways of "being a teacher" that they had experienced and observed during the term.

Early in the term, many students spoke or wrote of the fear that they lacked sufficient background knowledge in literature and writing to be English language arts teachers. By the end of the term, the education students spoke in terms of "life-long learning." Though they could identify areas of weakness in their knowledge base, most were comfortable that they had the knowledge to begin their teaching careers and accepted that their learning would continue. They had discarded the notion of teacher-as-authority in favour of teacher-as-learner. In working with the McKernan teachers, they became aware of the changes in experienced teachers' practice; later, in their practica, they were openly scornful of teachers whom they perceived to be mired in their practice. The students distinguished between knowledge base as regards structuring learning for students and knowledge base of particular works of literature. While the latter was seen as important, it no longer undermined their confidence in their fundamental preparation for teaching. Only Michael worried openly about having enough knowledge to structure learning for students; he spoke of this dilemma after hearing a guest speaker who was a personnel officer for a school district advise the class that his district wanted people who would be prepared to implement workshop approaches to writing instruction.

Feeling comfortable as "the teacher": trail guides and moths

> I'm like a trail guide with a pack burro loaded down with lots of provisions for the trip. I keep guiding people along the terrain. I guide students through their learning. Each trip is a new experience, new learning. I provided guidings, but every time you go over that territory you learn something new about it.
> (Marlaine)

In talking and writing about themselves as teachers at McKernan and at the end of the term, education students often thought in terms of metaphors. Metaphoric language can offer insight into a person's self-concept and behaviour (Bullough, 1991) as was evident from their comments. For some, like Marlaine, metaphors expressed visions of themselves as teachers. Robin described her outlook and her refusal to conform to her cooperating teacher's brand of teaching in a story of a moth who refused "to hang around the street light" with the others, preferring to fly toward the light of the stars. Meagan, acknowledging her conflicting feelings and behaviours, noted ruefully, "I'm like my collie--sometimes I'm soft and sometimes I snap." Amanda, in a sewing metaphor, visualized her growing understanding of reciprocal roles for teacher and learner.

Other metaphors were conscious indications of on-going change in philosophy and practice. When Dave became conscious of "the wall" between himself and his students, he was able to explore the metaphor's implications to begin changing his attitude and practice. His writing portfolio included a poem titled "The Wall," which began with a description of the walls as student constructions and ended:

> Each day a test, the walls stand against my weapons of siege,
> some shatter, some break,
> others crumble,
> many stand,
> and slowly I begin to think: "Are these great walls mine, or theirs?"
> I understand now, it is my wall, it will not come down easily,
> but slowly, brick by brick,
> I must tear down my walls, before theirs will fall.

In similar fashion, Kate's nose ring became a conscious symbol of her honesty and openness as a teacher. The decision not to wear it at McKernan was an indication of her unwillingness to take a great risk, a decision she discussed with full consciousness of its implications.

McKernan teachers: Magicians and professional community

The McKernan teachers, especially Gerry Bell, also discussed their roles in metaphoric terms. Referring to herself as a teacher who values creativity and multi-sensory approaches to learning, she said, "I'm a magician, and every magician does the linking rings. Everybody does it differently, but the trick's the same." Gerry structured her contribution to the McKernan project to provide teaching opportunities and resource support for education students to find their own style of "magic" in the classroom. Florence Iftody, in informal conversation, noted that she saw herself as a coach for the education students as they worked with her students. Then, laughing about her presence in the classroom to prevent possible student disruptions, added, "I'm a coach and a German Shepherd."

After the term ended, during a meeting of the McKernan teachers and Marg to plan for the following year, the conversation turned to the support that the education students find at McKernan. Don Garry noted that it was like a "decompression chamber" for the education students. In contrast to the usual "sink or swim" approach of practicum experiences, Gerry noted, "This experience is like giving them a life jacket, something that keeps them afloat, that keeps them confident as they tread the teaching waters." Expressing pleasure that the education students have the opportunity to work with several teachers in diverse ways, Gerry spoke of the underlying respect for students and each other that the McKernan teachers have:

> We feel not only respect, but a real thankfulness, for each other's different styles, for the benefit of our students. . . . The four of us together provide a tremendous variety of learning experiences. They get a three-ring circus! Look at the value. Look at the variety that you get and the fun of it!

The education students appreciated the atmosphere of professional collegiality, the respect for teachers and students, among the McKernan teachers. With Don they had a writing conference partner, and with all the teachers they had professional resources that many felt free to call upon during their practica. They spoke of having called the teachers, sometimes at their homes on a Sunday night, to ask for help in ideas or resources for their own teaching. A few education students later requested letters of reference from the teacher they knew the best; all four teachers reported writing reference letters for at least one education student. They were able, as Dave noted, "to confirm their suspicions and hypotheses" about students and about teaching strategies with the teachers. The network of peer support that had been established among class members extended to the McKernan teachers as well. For some education students, the practicum experience did not provide support or professional community, either through their lack of time to talk with teachers other than their cooperating teachers or through friction they perceived among the practicum school staff; for those students, the McKernan experience of community was the only such model they saw.

Marg: Integrating language arts instruction, sharing "turf," and throwing pebbles

Marg saw her role at McKernan as one aspect of her attempt to structure her teaching in an integrated fashion. She compared the integration needed in teacher education to integration in terms of language arts:

> We have a program we call the "integrated program," in which we are supposedly integrating theory and practice in a professional term in which education students study on campus for six weeks and do their student teaching for eight weeks. But this is not always integrated, as they often find a great discrepancy between their learning at the university and their experiences in the classroom. If we were truly to have

> an integrated term, then we have to do away with this theory-practice split. . . . It is a "theory into practice" structure, in which the student is left to do the integration on his or her own. We have the same idea in language arts when we teach "the essay." It's like the comparison essay we used to ask kids to write, where one way to do it is to tell about A in one paragraph, tell about B in the next paragraph, and then have a short ending paragraph pulling it together. We have the short time at the end of the term (which wasn't there a few years ago) when we try to help people pull it all together. But basically, they are left to do that alone.

Her model for instruction accorded with her belief in integration in language arts education, in which language is a means of learning and in which learning experiences are structured for diversity and personal intention.

In practicum situations where there is great dissonance between the dominant philosophy of the university and that of the school, the resolution of the dissonance becomes an important aspect of Marg's definition of her role as a curriculum-and-instruction professor. The experiences her students have at McKernan School provide a key to that resolution:

> I try to help my students find harmony in discord. Often there's discord between what they read in the textbooks and what they see in their practicum. They have to be able to fit in to a school, find some harmony even though there are many different practices going on. And at McKernan, there is a real harmony in the fact that regardless of what work they are doing in any class with any group of kids, they see that the teachers in the school like the kids and value their work. They comment all the time about the students' work displayed on the walls, in the halls, and in the classrooms. And they don't always see that at their practicum placements.

She also viewed one aspect of her role as helping her students "live in ambiguity." The school context is always characterized by ambiguity, and teachers learn that there is rarely a single method of teaching or responding to situations. She focuses upon a commitment to lifelong learning to help reassure her students:

> My students often come into the courses thinking that they have to know everything before they can start teaching, and I try to help them realize that this is impossible. They will continue learning throughout their careers.

Marg gained a broader perspective on the added teaching potential of her role at McKernan from Kate in the staff room one day. Kate spoke of her enjoyment of Marg's availability for informal talk at McKernan, noting the difference she felt between relating to Marg on campus and at McKernan:

> I don't want to sit in your office because I'm intimidated by your office. It's not common ground. It's your turf. . . . I don't feel that I have the right to talk to you about anything that I want to. [On campus] I would never bring you one of my journals or drafts of my portfolio pieces to read. . . . Although you introduced us to McKernan, I feel now that I belong here just as much as you do in a sense, because I'm working here too. . . . Here I've gotten to know you, to trust you to read my work.

Marg, in discussing the notion of "turf" noted that she could not have helped in the process of writing if she were not allowed to read drafts of work. For Marg, it was a vivid lesson, for we both saw Kate as very self-confident; if she were intimidated by a professor's "turf," how much more so are students who are not confident as students or as writers?

At the end of the term, I asked education students for their views of Marg's role and purpose at McKernan. I thought their replies--what they saw as her role and whether they thought that she was teaching them during that time--would illustrate their understanding of being a teacher. Clearly, in Marg's eyes, at McKernan School she was teaching students about learning and teaching language arts, or, as she once described her job, "I help people learn how to help people learn how to read and write and use their language." I wondered whether her students would see her intentions in relation to their understanding of being a teacher of language arts. It was one of the only overtly "loaded" questions--questions for which I already had my own answer--in my research.

All the students spoke enthusiastically in terms of Marg as a role model of a teacher, of a language arts teacher in particular. They knew explicitly that Marg's was a practice-what-you-preach approach, which they contrasted vividly with the bulk of their university education. Judy in particular was sustained through a negative practicum experience by her sense of Marg's "strong personality and commitment to her ideals."

Just as they had appreciated being welcomed into the McKernan teachers' their professional community, the education students also noted that Marg's tone was always collegial. Particularly during the callback days, when student teachers are often reluctant to become students again, Michael noted the feeling of professionalism:

> [The callback days] have been like PD [professional development] days for us. . . . If we were teachers, we'd be going to PD days, and I think this is how they would be run. But it's like she's been running the whole class; although she's giving us things to learn, she's presenting it in a way that she hopes, I think, that we will become as English teachers. She presents the material to us in the way that she hopes we will be presenting it to our kids. She's portraying the material that she's giving us. Modelling it.

Several students spoke of Marg as a mediator, someone who provided support and freedom for learning. Arlene also saw Marg as

> . . . a buffer between us and everything else at McKernan, so that if there were problems, she was there, and if there were successes, she made sure that they were seen.

The examples and value of individuality and multiple models of teaching were clear to them. Christine wrote a portfolio entry about working together with her peers. An accompanying drawing depicted each of the education students as a piece of fruit and Marg as the bowl that held them all.

She spoke of Marg as having provided a variety of situations and experiences from which to learn. Amanda added her view:

> She wanted us to not only learn from her, but to learn from other people and other situations. She didn't want to just shelter us in the classroom. She thought that there was more out there to offer us than just her knowledge. . . . She recognizes that we all learn in different ways. For some of us, not for me, [reading about] the writers workshop is enough, but for me, if I didn't see it working, I could never run one.

Most of the students did not mention whether they had had different expectations of Marg at McKernan, but Kate told Marg of her surprise:

> I was surprised that you [Marg] were so available. Even though you said you'd be here to help, but I didn't believe it. I didn't know what to expect, in spite of those people [the former students and the McKernan administrators] coming to class to talk with us. I guess I thought it would be like student teaching, where the cooperating teacher pops in and out. But it's been incredible, having you and Jill here to talk so much.

Several students said that at McKernan Marg was no longer in the evaluator role, while several others were always aware of that aspect of her relationship with them. These people mentioned their anxiety about the writing portfolios and admitted that that assignment coloured their perception of Marg's role. This view certainly was borne out by the "hierarchy" mentioned earlier, as several students brought their writing first to a McKernan teacher, then to me, and finally to Marg for writing conferences and discussions of drafts.

As students spoke of Marg's role, they used phrases like "role model" and "providing experiences for us" but did not use the word "teaching." If I asked explicitly whether Marg was teaching at McKernan," students would affirm that by structuring experiences and providing support, she was teaching. But no one used the word to define her role unless I asked explicitly. Perhaps some took it so much for granted as the foundation of what she was doing that they did not use the word.

Dave, however, as usual had an interesting response when I asked him about Marg's role at McKernan. After noting, "To tell you the truth, I didn't see her in any role at all, if that makes any sense," he went on to clarify:

> What I saw her as was this interesting person that you could talk to in the staff room. That's what it was, and I saw you [Jill] in that role too. I really liked that. I would say, "I'm going back to the staff room to talk with Marg and Jill" because it was interesting. . . . I got this impression of these old librarians [pause for Jill to complain about the adjective], just this image of this person who sits in the back of the library and . . . they're the most wonderful source of information. That's sort of what I saw Marg as there--not there to be our evaluator, not there to be our teacher, she was there to help us if we had questions. I think it was nice that she sat back and said, "If you have any concerns, bring them to me, but I don't need reports from you. I'm not going to come in and watch your classes." The only time that I saw her in class, she came in and took a whole bunch of pictures. [It] is a really nice role for her to take, as just being someone who was there for us if we needed something, even just to talk to. A whole lot of the talk in the staff room was incidental to what was being taught, but it was of value, it meant so much to me.

I asked Dave for clarification of this statement about the staff room talk. [My clearest memories of his staff room talk with Marg or me were of conversations about teaching literature. I was uncertain whether he meant the talk was incidental to any teaching or to his particular teaching at McKernan.] He said that the staff room talk

> takes you away from being the teacher. When you are teacher, you are expected to be the person with the answers. You are out there in front of the class and you are their resource person. You are the instigator of their learning. I like to use that word because I am an instigator--I go around and disturb the students and get them doing things. But you are the instigator of their work and you are the person who provides them with the impetus to learn. It's nice having someone who does that for you in the staff room.

By this point in the conversation, I was becoming very confused by the apparent contradiction in Dave's statements: Marg was not functioning as a teacher, but she was doing the same things that Dave did when he described himself as teaching. When I noted my confusion, Dave said perhaps it was a matter of degree. He said that Marg's and my staff room conversations with him had stirred up his thinking about teaching literature, but he illustrated the difference in degree with two metaphors:

> I see myself as a little goblin with a sharp stick, going around poking kids when they aren't working. I see your role and Marg's role at McKernan as people chucking rocks into still ponds, . . . because that's how the conversations came out. Talking about science fiction, here's me saying, "Well, I guess we can't teach science fiction in school"--the dead calm of the stagnant pond. And then Jill comes along and plunks a pebble in there, and these ripples start and they get bigger and bigger and out they go. That's what those conversations essentially went through.

Nancie Atwell writes of "nudging" students to encourage their learning. While education students appreciated the theoretic nuances of "nudging" students, their work and thinking as beginning teachers was very concerned with developing the subtlety of the "nudge." Dave's visions of the differences between a goblin with a stick and a person throwing pebbles were perhaps his explorations at that time of Atwell's "nudges." While at McKernan he was frustrated by his lack of authority over one uncooperative student, his comments here (and certainly his teaching when I observed him in his practicum) indicated a growing sophistication in his understanding of the role of teacher, despite his declaration of Marg's "lack of role" at McKernan. She too was "in the middle," in Dave's eyes, blurring her roles.

Seen by her students as a role model, a buffer between the school world and the education students, and a fellow teacher, Marg provided an example of student-centred teaching for them. In bringing her class to McKernan

School, she provided, in Atwell's phrase, "time, ownership, and response" for their growing understanding of teaching and learning language arts.

Jill: Researching the researcher

In preparing to join the class at university and at McKernan, I anticipated tensions in the dual roles of participant and observer, of teacher and researcher. I tried to monitor my perceptions of the two roles. Experienced as a teacher and relatively inexperienced as a researcher, I knew that my inclination by experience and temperament was to lean toward the participant role; I began my involvement with the class by trying to compensate for my leanings, trying to lean a little the other way. When Kate and others agonized over "which hat do I wear?" I empathized with their dilemma but chose not to say so. I did not want my role or presence to be highlighted excessively; the less focus there was upon whether Jill was studying them or teaching them, the better, I felt. Knowing my purpose and defined role within their class, the students initially granted me the status of a teaching assistant--not the evaluator but someone who speaks with the evaluator.

Naturally, things changed at McKernan. I soon realized that the notion of the different hats was as misleading for me as an observer and participant as it ultimately is for the student and teacher. I brought my teaching knowledge, experience, and sensibilities to my research observations; I brought my research questions and observations to my participation. On the second day at McKernan, I sat in on the chaotic planning session for the "appearance and reality" group trying desperately and mostly successfully to observe only, to refrain from offering the help that an experienced teacher could offer. Yet the preceding day, only three hours into McKernan, I became the stand-in "university partner" for a "sentence demon" group. I felt uncomfortable at both extremes those first two days; I felt it almost immoral not to offer more assistance to the planning group and would have felt equally wrong stepping too far into the university partner's shoes.

However, the roles merged naturally when students began to ask me for writing conferences. By talking with individuals about their writing, I functioned optimally both as participant (a teacher and writer participant) and as researcher who was learning most directly about her research questions: what better way to learn what someone understands about writing than by discussing his or her writing together? One real regret I have about my research is that I felt unable to share any of my writing with others. The only writing I was doing at that time was my field notes and journal, and I felt unable to share those. In retrospect, I'm uncertain that sharing some of that writing would have been a problem; it might in fact have been a tremendous strength for my research.

As the professional community of education students and teachers evolved at McKernan School, I became another member of the community, another available resource. On the first day of university class, in introducing myself and explaining my research, I had invited the education students to use me as a resource in their thinking and working. At the time, that was my idea of "giving back," of not being a research parasite on the class. At McKernan, this invitation was accepted completely, as the class members learned to see everyone and everything as resources. Education students were quick to realize what I was noticing too: that my questions and conversation helped them to make explicit their learning or, on occasion, to spur their thinking. By the end of the term, when I was interviewing class members in small groups, I found Judy jotting notes after her interview: she wanted to include what she had told me in her final synthesis paper.

The McKernan teachers at various times thanked me for my interest in their teaching and noted that my questions had helped them to think about their practice in new or different ways. Together with education student comments to the same effect, these comments affirmed for me that my role as researcher had not been an undue annoyance for others nor had my presence added pressure for the education students. That affirmation was just the tip of my gratitude for their generosity in time and spirit.

Language and Learning

> You know, when I went home, I had to write it all down. I wasn't really sure of what happened there, but I knew a lot happened.
>
> (Ruth)

> After we wrote it [the readers theatre script about being a student teacher], I felt better just understanding the dilemma. I didn't need a resolution because I thought, "Yes, that's right, I am both [a student and a teacher], and I can live with that."
>
> (Marlaine)

Whether Ruth was trying to make sense of a difficult planning session in her "appearance and reality" group, or Marlaine was struggling with the dilemma of being "in the middle," or Dave was talking about his understanding of teaching literature, language helped the students to shape their understanding. Language--whether shared in informal conversation, written privately in a journal for solitary reflection or response from Marg, or written in a poem or script and shared communally--was vital to the learning of the class members.

Expressive Talk

The staff room, which the class used as a home base, became the language heart of the McKernan project. Marg was available there most times for talk and writing conferences, and students could arrange to work together or could enjoy casual conversations in their time between classes. They could pick up professional articles and books on the shelves and have others available to discuss the reading. They could sit alone writing in journals or crafting writing for their portfolios. If they were unsure of how to respond to a student's work, they had an ample supply of extra readers with whom to discuss the work. There was also time and opportunity to talk socially or to find company for a walk to the corner grocery store.

Between classes, education students met with others to discuss what went right or wrong in class, what to do about the student who wouldn't work today, how much responsibility to take for unmotivated groups, and more importantly, how to help get the group on track. Talk that began with a general complaint about a student or a group soon re-focused on understanding the problem and working toward improving the situation.

One of Marg's explicit intentions in developing the McKernan project was to provide a language-for-learning situation for her students. She compared the differences in language of her language arts majors in her integrated program at McKernan with the language in her on-campus classes of language arts minors:

> The language that happens surrounding the school both in school and after people go back to campus is a language of professionalism. It's a language of teaching and learning. They are not students talking to each other about student concerns, although my students do talk about assignments, and so on. It's a language of the staff room: "What do I do to help this kid? What activities have you done that are successful? My students weren't very attentive today, was that your experience too? Oh, there's a dance--I should have realized." It's that kind of conversation that surrounds their reading, surrounds their teaching and learning, their class assignments, their journal writing. It's not the language of being a student. I find with my minors that their discussion is more student-to-student or social. . . . The biggest

> difference is that it's so contextualized. My English minors don't have a shared teaching context other than our class . They do tend to talk about schools they've been in and their own learning experience. After practicum, they do talk to me about things they saw in their practicum, but there's no integration of their readings and their work with children; those experiences are separated. The language in [McKernan] school becomes a language of shared practice.

The shared context of McKernan was a feature that the class members noted with enthusiasm, particularly after their practica were completed. While several spoke of the isolation of the practicum, where most often there was neither time nor person with whom to share their teaching dilemmas (the cooperating teacher's role as evaluator precluding some genuine communication), they noted the benefits of having peers in one's teaching situation. Barbara rated this aspect as one of the greatest benefits for her at McKernan:

> I think that was an interesting experience when six of you experience the same teaching moment, or the same teaching experience, with the same cares, and you walk out, and you have the same thing to talk about. We can come in and talk about how our practicums went, but they were so divorced from each other. . . we can't connect. . . . That's what I like about McKernan.

For Dave, that talk moderated his anger when his idea for an activity in the "appearance and reality" groups fell flat with his own group but succeeded in the other groups. Though Florence had told him that no activity succeeds with all groups, he needed to hear positive comments from other group leaders to lessen his own disappointment.

In conversations with the McKernan teachers and Marg, the talk turned easily and frequently to methods of instruction and classroom organization. The McKernan teachers and Marg's class, having all read Nancie Atwell, informally discussed the nuances of Atwell's organization and beliefs. As the education students came to see everyone around them as resources, they exploited their opportunities to discuss professional practice with professional colleagues.

Seeing workshops in operation in two classes and knowing that other teachers in the school also structured workshops, education students focused on nuts-and-bolts questions rather than the typical student-to-teacher questions of the university classroom, "Does this sort of thing really work? Does anyone do it, or is it just another university theory?" The number of students who requested writing conferences from each other as well as from Don Garry, Marg, and/or me grew steadily throughout the weeks at McKernan, as students came to appreciate the importance of talk in clarifying their thinking about their writing. Marg noted:

> I think also it's very easy for the students to ask me or the teachers in the school to comment on our own background, to comment on our own responses to things that we've read. Don Garry, for example, uses mini-lessons pretty much as Nancie Atwell lays them out. Some of my students question that, and he's able to explain to them his rationale. I'm able to explain to them how I might do it differently. There's no question that I know and Don doesn't, or vice versa, it's that we process it differently. And they're very understanding of that kind of difference. There's a language difference that separates my students from me when we talk about assignments. They use the language of permission; they'll ask me, "How long should it be? Is it all right if I do it this way?" The rest of the time, it's much more a case where they'll ask me, "Do you have anything on Lord of the Flies? I'll bring them something, tell them something they might look for in the library. They can see me much more as a resource when I'm in the staff room at McKernan.

While the theme of professional growth in one's vision of self as teacher was the foundation of all the learning that took place, the expressive talk surrounding the entire context of McKernan was the means and expression of that growth. The education students learned explicitly the value and power of surrounding one's learning with language in many forms.

Writing

The culture of writing that developed among education students was certainly the most overpowering impression of their work at McKernan. In this dynamic conjunction of "planned and spontaneous" curriculum, as Marg called it, education students were "writing to learn, learning to write" (Murray, 1985). The writing flowed naturally from private, expressive journal writing to shared writing in literary forms--poetry, letters, personal essays, readers theatre scripts, and stories. In developing from journal entry expressions of observations or confusion, to tentative first drafts and later revisions of works which were discussed in writing conferences, the writing became a measure of the thinking. Successively more polished drafts of work showed clearer thinking and broader understanding of topics. As this phenomenon became apparent to education students, their appreciation of the value of writing to learn grew. So, in many instances, did their understanding of the literary forms in which they wrote.

Journals

The lack of personal writing in the school experience of the education students was shocking at times, though not out of character with the traditional exclusion of personal writing for secondary students (Britton et. al., 1975). Not only was poetry excluded territory for many, but for some all suggestion of voice had been rejected. Sharon reported having had a university paper returned by a professor with the word "I" circled in red and the comment, "Who do you think you are, anyway?" For Sharon and others with similar experiences, the assignment to write a journal was both exhilarating and intimidating. Marg's structure and response to journals provided a supportive environment and a model of response as education students struggled to find their voices in journal writing.

The assigned-but-ungraded status of the journals made an opportunity for genuine writing. No non-journaler needed to manufacture an artificial journal for comments and grades, as Michael reported having done on previous occasions. Michael, avoiding the subterfuge of an artificial journal, was free to focus upon finding forms of language suitable for his purposes. His letters to and from students in his practicum reflect this focus.

All but three class members invited Marg to read and respond to their journal entries, many later commenting on the value of this modelling of response. For experienced teachers, and certainly for beginners, the nature of response to journals poses great difficulty. Textbook advice about appropriate response did not teach as clearly as did the modelling of responses. Sharon was especially focused upon her growing appreciation of subtleties of journal response:

> In this CI [curriculum-and-instruction] class, I believe the environment is consciously set up to enhance writing. For instance, as I skim my journals I see a trend. Not surprisingly, my first journal entries are guarded, tentative and concerned with what I sound like; they remind me of an intimidated child offering a slight glimpse of her inner self, half expecting rejection. The first teacher comments, pencilled, are very encouraging and positive. They convey the message, "It's all right for you to share your thoughts with me--they are valid, trust me." As the trust is manifest, my journals become more animated and spontaneous. And the pencilled comments change in tone to provide suggestions, nudges, and challenges. The environment is safe, so I continue to write. . . . I skimmed my journals for pencilled comments that . . . I particularly liked or would like to use myself. One I like is, "How ironic. You've learned what you already knew." I love this comment because in many ways it sums up my entire university career. . . . A pencilled comment I will try to use myself is, "Do you remember the poem 'I Forgot to Do My Work Today?'" At first glance, this comment seems quite ordinary. But what happened after I read it isn't. I had, in fact, never read the poem, but the comment moved me to go to

> the library, find the poem, and read it. I now "own" this poem, and I don't "own" many poems.

Many students assigned journals during their practica, knowing, like Sharon, the value of journal writing for the discovery and development of voice, for the discovery in the ordinariness of our lives that "we all have a story to tell." In many cases, the journal assignments represented negotiations between unconvinced cooperating teachers and enthusiastic student teachers. In all cases, even with limited time for introducing journal work, the education students noted their satisfaction in their accomplishments in working productively with students using journals.

Even Michael, who did not keep a journal, found the importance of personal writing in his teaching. Michael impressed me with his natural ability to relate well with his students, and he prided himself on those personal connections. When Michael shared a poem (his first ever, he reported) with his classmates, it was a wry portrayal of a student with whom he did not connect; despite his humour, the failure clearly bothered him. Later, in his practicum, Michael reported that his proudest moment was when he received a letter response from a student with whom he had had trouble relating.

Portfolios

A common comment accompanying a poem was "This is the first poem I've ever written" or "This is the first poem I've written since I was in junior high." In such instances, the quality of the poem was insignificant compared to the enormous stride taken in writing and, more so, sharing the work. Like a child's offer of a short-stemmed dandelion bouquet, the thing itself is of less import than the work of gathering and the generosity of sharing. Struggling to write and present a poem provided thorough appreciation of the enormity of teachers' demands upon students. Repeatedly, education students exclaimed that they would know what students were going through when asked to write and that they knew that writing was essential to learning. They experienced the insecurity of sharing work, as well as the benefits of that sharing. Barbara the experienced poet learned that her students could share her writing; Arlene knew the importance of overcoming her students' reluctance to display their work during her practicum.

Education students understood the importance of intention in writing. They experienced a surge in their own writing that came from taking ownership of topic and form, and they appreciated the power and proficiency of the writing of McKernan students. Later in their practica, they recalled this proficiency when advised that students "can't" or "won't" write. Lorraine was typical of many education students whose cooperating teachers asserted their students' inability to write. Lorraine was initially dismayed when advised to reconsider her writing plans because her grade 10 students "couldn't write more than one paragraph; they never had." After realizing that none of the previous assignments had provided freedom for students' ownership of writing, Lorraine was reassured enough to continue with her plans. The results surprised the cooperating teacher, and reconfirmed what Lorraine had learned at McKernan, as students wrote quantities of work that both agreed showed quality as well.

Kate, who had written volumes of poetry and stories for years, reconsidered her earlier writing in light of what she saw of McKernan students' writing. She recognized in her own writing the dichotomy between writing with and without ownership:

> . . . seeing what the kids wrote in The Write Stuff really opened my eyes. I went home and reread my poetry from my own junior high days. I had these flowery poems, "nice" poems in a "pretty" form. I had

> some good stuff, and people always liked my poetry, but looking back I can tell that my topics were assigned. . . . The teachers never encouraged us to explore different areas, and if we did on our own, it didn't come into school. So I just like the space, my own space, and I like to give students space. I don't always need someone standing over me telling me what to do and what I'm doing wrong, and neither do the students.

In the double communities of writing workshops at McKernan School--in which education students with Marg and Don created one writing community and education students participated in writing workshops with junior high school students--the power of writing with, in Atwell's phrase, "time, ownership, and response" became evident. Education students appreciated the interrelation of those three qualities in their own work and in the work of children.

In recent years the importance of the narrative mode of knowing, as distinct from the paradigmatic mode, has finally been recognized and explored in the context of teachers and education (Bruner, 1985; Connelly and Clandinin, 1985). Given the context-specific nature of the narrative mode, it is ideally suited to teachers living classroom lives characterized by uniqueness of context and character. Connelly and Clandinin, writing of the "minded practice" of teachers, in which teachers integrate all their modes of knowing in decision making, highlight the importance of teachers' explicit narration of and "giving back" their teaching lives.

While creating the beginning narratives of their teaching lives at McKernan, education students engaged in narration in two senses: living the stories and encounters and writing the stories. The writing portfolios provided a forum in which to process the raw narratives of experience and begin, through literary fashioning, to understand and extend the significance of the encounters. The writing emphasized the element of consciousness, which Bruner notes is essential to narrative knowing:

> [Narrative knowing] operates by construing two landscapes simultaneously. One is the landscape of action, where the constituents are the arguments of action. . . . Its other landscape is the landscape of consciousness: what those in the action know, think, or feel. The two landscapes are essential and distinct: it is the difference between Oedipus sharing Jocasta's bed before and after he learns from the messenger that she is his mother.
>
> (1985, p.99)

By inscribing their stories in poems and stories, the education students shape their understanding of the personal encounter or event as well as secure some permanence for the understanding to travel along on their teaching journeys. The writing may even, as LeGuin suggests, enlarge the scope of possible future narratives:

> Fiction in particular, narration in general, may be seen not as a disguise or falsification of what is given but as an active encounter with the environment by means of posing options and alternatives, and an enlargement of present reality by connecting it to the unverifiable past and the unpredictable future.
>
> The historian manipulates, arranges, connects, and the storyteller also invents.
>
> (1989, p.44-45)

Thus, in writing in literary forms the education students engaged in opportunities for learning in several ways: they learned about the writing process by shaping and revising their own works; they learned about teaching writing by experiencing the writing process and by engaging in writing conferences with experienced teachers and with their peers; and they extended their understanding of their experiences and emotions by shaping, discussing, and revising drafts of writing in various genres. The writing was surrounded and supported by oral language with peers and experienced teachers, with neophyte and proficient writers, with friends and colleagues who served as readers and audience for the written works.

Student-Centred Teaching and Learning

"They want to be cared for gently, the same as I do."
(Amanda)

The structuring of their work at McKernan School allowed education students to learn about students as individuals and as learners; both the lack of evaluation for teaching performance and the lack of full-class teaching fostered a focus upon students. The education students whom I joined at McKernan spoke as glowingly as did my initial interviewees about these two benefits. They affirmed that working with students in groups and individually at McKernan prepared them for the added burdens of student teaching.

Perceptions of student differences

In her review of studies of competent teaching and competent beginning teaching, Anne Reynolds (1992) details competent teaching along a continuum of experience in teaching tasks. Naturally, her review indicates that teachers' understanding of students strongly influences their decisions and actions, and good experienced teachers have a more complex understanding of student differences than do beginning teachers. She cites Paine's four categories of differences: individual (biological and psychological), categorical (class, gender, ethnicity), contextual (consideration of the social construction of categorical differences), and pedagogical (pedagogical implications of student diversity). Studies by Paine and others indicate that beginning teachers understand student differences in abstract, idealistic terms rather than in concrete situational terms. Their perception of student diversity is limited to individual and, to a lesser degree, categorical differences:

> Consequently, they tend to see student differences as decontextualized, which makes them unsure of how to concretize the abstract notions of fairness and

> equality in teaching. Thus, they suggest teaching methods that treat diversity as a problem, not as a phenomenon.
>
> (1992, p.10)

The focus upon individuals and small groups allowed the education students at McKernan to expand their understanding of student diversity. Working intensely with a few individuals, they were able to consider pedagogical implications of student diversity. The link between individual differences and pedagogy became clear both in working with their students and in working with their peers in planning sessions. For appreciation of implications of categorical and contextual differences, McKernan provided a comparison for education students, several of whom did their practica at schools markedly different in ethnicity and socio-economic status.

Learning about individuals

In staff room talk, in journal writing, and in portfolio poetry and essays, education students agonized over and celebrated their relationships with their students. Though their work involved some evaluation, the education students and school students alike knew that the primary evaluator for the report card period was the teacher, not the university partner, so evaluation posed no real barrier to the relationships that developed.

Junior high students "enjoy" an undeserved reputation among many education students as "irrational monsters;" the degree of fear with which some education students approach this age group cannot be overestimated. Despite the reality in Alberta that almost all beginning secondary teachers can expect to teach in junior high schools, many education students assert their intentions to teach only in senior high school. Annette wrote a portfolio piece entitled "Real People," in which she traced with humour her growth from an initial horror of facing junior high students. Her early reaction was:

> The mere sight of rambunctious, hyperactive, hormone-filled bodies is enough to send me to a psychologist. . . . Please, have mercy. Let me practice teaching on adults--you know--real people.

For Annette and others who entered McKernan's halls with distinctly worried expressions the first day, hearing the McKernan teachers speak of their students with affection, respect, and humour was reassuring. In working with adolescents, education students discovered that the energy they initially feared could be channelled and encouraged to make junior high school classrooms fascinating places; Annette moved quickly from terror to astonishment:

> They have an amazing zest for life and energy which allows them to move mountains. Their imagination is like no other age group for quality, and they can make me laugh even when I've had the most miserable day. But what I enjoy and find most incredible about these kids is that . . .they are so different that I have a hard time believing they are all approximately the same age.

Several education students ended the term by noting that one of the most important things they had learned at McKernan was that they wanted to teach junior high students. Annette was not alone in admitting her early misjudgment:

> During my stay at McKernan, I discovered a most enthralling fact--junior high students are REAL people, sometimes even more real than adults. They have feelings, thoughts, creativity, and imagination that sometimes far exceeds that of older generations. They are growing. Unfortunately, adults often stop.
>
> As an adult,I have made a resolution to grow with my students and, eventually, become as real as they are.

The conjunction of the writing portfolio requirements and work with McKernan students provided a valuable means and forum for exploration of understanding of individual students. The focus in many poems and stories was on the individual student, a celebration in literary forms of the unique individuals whom the education students met.

Annette's troubled view of her student's insecurity in her poem "Along the Way," Marlaine's observation of a student's use of her hair to conceal her face and thoughts in "Growing Up and Down," Michael's humorous poem about his student who continually asked what time the class would end--these and many other poems were a means and expression of empathy with their junior high students, adopting their perspectives and enabling them, as Marlaine wrote, "to catch a glimpse of what it's like inside my world." Those glimpses, made indelible through their close work and through the tangible poem, followed the education students into their practicum experiences and will likely remain throughout their teaching careers.

Categorical and contextual differences

One note of suspicion sounded occasionally by education students about their work with students at McKernan School involved categorization of the school and students. Despite the portrayal of the school by Marg and by the McKernan administrators and staff as a "normal" place with most of the typical social problems besetting any school and community, some education students initially questioned the applicability of their learning at McKernan in a different school context. They knew of McKernan's reputation, populated by children of well-educated and affluent parents. They wondered whether the positive atmosphere they experienced there would be possible to achieve with a different clientele.

In my initial interviews, this matter had been discussed by Roy, who wondered how his positive experience at this "language-based city school" would compare with his practicum experience teaching on a native reserve. Not only was he reassured that the philosophy and practices he enjoyed at McKernan were valuable in the native school, but he also found that he could provide reassurances to those sceptical teachers at the native school.

The greater duration and intensity of an eight-week practicum experience allows a student teacher to become more aware of social and economic circumstances of students and school than did the shorter, more sheltered stay at McKernan. The education students had a general impression of the McKernan student body without confronting any large-scale problems of the school. Nevertheless, it provided a point of some comparison.

In this group of education students, only Michael and Amanda spoke of their practicum schools as being significantly different in social circumstance than McKernan. They both saw their practicum schools as less affluent, with less parental involvement and more overtly dysfunctional families than they were aware of at McKernan. While these differences initially shocked them--Michael spoke of police in school and a parent refusing to speak with her son's teacher--both found a certain congruity in the value of teaching methods that focused on a child-centred approach. For Michael, the value of expressive writing was proven more conclusively by his more socially-disadvantaged students; at McKernan, he felt that students were grade-oriented and that grades could function as motivation for some students, but at his practicum school, students wrote expressively because they wanted to. Michael and Amanda both spoke of the importance of a child-centred approach regardless of the circumstances of the children and the school.

Learning about learners

When Laurie was uncooperative in Sharon's "sentence demon" group, Sharon could not simply dismiss her as a discipline problem, an unmotivated student, although Sharon initially saw her that way. Laurie was one of five students, however, not one of thirty, so she remained more visible than she might have done if Sharon were teaching a full class. When Sharon learned, to her surprise, that Laurie was bored, having grasped "parallelism" faster than any of her peers, Sharon learned a valuable lesson. She began to restructure her attitude and her plans to take Laurie into account.

When Lorraine realized that one of her students was painfully shy, she began to question her assumptions and her practice. Extroverted and gregarious, Lorraine had always accepted the value of drama strategies in language arts. Tchudi and Mitchell's textbook warning about "the threat of drama" struck a chord with Lorraine as she considered her student. She began to question how to support and comfort students who were uncomfortable speaking publicly. Talking with several education students and me, she came upon Meagan, who claimed to have been painfully shy. This conversation led Lorraine to her best resource: her older sister had suffered agonies in school when forced to read aloud or have the spotlight in any way. Lorraine, who had lived her whole life with a sister who responded very differently than she did, began to consider how to accommodate such individual differences. Her sister vividly recalled the pain that Lorraine could not have imagined. With help from colleagues, Lorraine considered ways of tailoring her group work to support her shy student, using her sister as a sounding board before introducing ideas in class.

With the emphatic focus upon individuals that small-group work can engender, education students such as Sharon and Lorraine had the opportunity to discover more about their students and to refashion their teaching plans to respond to the needs of those children. As Reynolds noted in her review of competent teaching, each of the four kinds of perceptions that teachers may have concerning student diversity builds upon the preceding one. Perceptions of implications for pedagogical differences are rarely shown by beginning teachers. But by allowing opportunities for education students to teach individuals rather than classes, the McKernan project work allowed those perceptions to develop.

Ironies of a "non-pressured" situation

While I can detail instances in which the lack of performance pressure permitted greater student-centred teaching and learning, there was also a curious undercurrent of performance anxiety among the education students. This anxiety manifested itself in several ways and on several occasions, consciously or unconsciously for the education students. Consciously, they discussed it in terms of the "ownership" of their "sentence demon" groups' performances; how much ownership ought the university partner to assume? Will the university partner look like a bad teacher if his or her group does not perform well? Dave spoke explicitly of feeling that his teaching ability was being condemned when his activity fell flat with his group.

In the readers theatre script of Marlaine, Michael, and Lorraine, the student teacher agonizes over this issue. She is torn between intervening, as she sees it, to improve the product of the group and allowing the students to develop their ideas with more genuine ownership of the product. At the end, the student teacher's "angel" voice prevails, and the student teacher is satisfied that her student-centred approach has been successful. However, in an ironic twist that I am certain was not deliberate, the three education students wrote an ending in which the student teacher congratulates her students on their work, saying, "You guys really made me look great, but don't forget that you really did all the work." In allowing her students freedom, then, the student teacher satisfied, rather than overcame, her performance anxiety.

This irony is perhaps inescapable, as a beginning teacher cannot avoid worrying about her own performance. In my initial interviews, students spoke positively (and in retrospect) of the lack of performance pressure. Only when I participated in the McKernan project, however, did I learn that the education students, while having no externally imposed performance pressure, still operated under the weight of their own internal performance anxiety.

I can think of no way of preventing this occurrence, for in fact if not in admission, even experienced teachers have a strong interest in their performance. While studies show that experienced teachers devote less attention to their performance (Reynolds, 1992), perhaps the meaning to be derived is that, having more confidence in their performance, they do not need to dwell upon it. Even many experienced teachers, however, view their students' results on external exams as commentaries on their own performances as teachers. Perhaps those external exam results are an extension of the "sentence demon" group performances.

For beginning teachers, performance anxiety is real and performance pressure will be perceived regardless of the teaching circumstance or absence of formal evaluation. Given that, perhaps the best way for teacher educators to reduce this anxiety is to structure sufficient opportunities to teach without external performance pressure. In student teaching, where the cooperating teacher writes the formal evaluation of teaching performance, no teaching situation is perceived by the student teacher as being "non-evaluated," despite any reassurances to the contrary. At McKernan, the only performance pressure was the internally imposed pressure, and those students who experienced what they perceived as a failure could learn from it without penalty.

Planning and organizing for diversity

In working with two or more teachers at McKernan School, the education students gained experience planning in a variety of ways and organizational structures. From their comments in their "pre-course thoughts on teaching language arts," they began the term with the common misunderstanding of inexperienced teachers that "content, equipment, and materials" are the keys to successful lessons (Sabers, Cushing, and Berliner quoted in Reynolds, 1992); at McKernan, many learned to put their students at the center of their planning process. They learned to adjust and revise plans to suit the needs of students, as Sharon did when she re-organized her group and her expectations to suit her group's personal dynamics and instructional needs. They learned, as Dave noted, that "a unit plan is a piece of paper until the students are considered." The education students began to understand this idea not just in theory but in practice--before they began their student teaching practica.

In planning for their group work, the education students experienced some variety according to the teachers' structuring. Don structured his "sentence demon" assignment quite explicitly, including allotment of marks for the work. His assignment left much freedom in the development of the skit but provided an overall planned structure. The education students who planned the "appearance and reality" mini-unit for Florence's classes had more freedom, approximating the flexibility in planning of a classroom teacher. For these students, the planning itself was as much a challenge as the teaching. As discussed at length in "Narratives," the education students who planned together had a double lesson from this experience--a lesson in planning and a lesson in group work, from their initial clashing to their ultimate harmony and appreciation for each other's styles and contributions. Those education students who planned individually for Florence's class experienced both more isolation and more individual freedom in their work, with the attendant advantages and disadvantages of each. Gerry offered a third alternative in planning. She gave the education students much latitude but also provided access to her resources.

In having the experience base of McKernan as contrast for some of the procedures at their practicum schools, students were able to move beyond a blanket "it works or it doesn't work" assessment of plans and procedures into more subtle underpinnings of why and how plans work or do not work. Barbara, for example, noted with disapproval that though her cooperating teacher had USSR (unsupervised, silent, sustained reading) time, it did not work well because it lasted only seven minutes, as compared with twenty minutes at McKernan, at the beginning of the period. Lacking time enough to become engrossed in any reading, students just wasted the time getting into seats and shuffling papers.

Organizing groups

In Reynolds' review of competent teaching, she cites several studies indicating the importance of a teacher's skill in organizing groups appropriately to meet the teacher's needs and instructional goals as well as the needs of students. Variety in group organization, composition, and task is desirable. She adds:

> Little is known about how effectively beginning teachers use instructional grouping; however, given descriptions of beginning teachers as less familiar with student differences and ways to accommodate these differences in instruction, beginners may have difficulty selecting the appropriate grouping strategy for a given goal and group of students.
> (1992, p.17)

At McKernan, however, education students worked with teachers who structured group situations in various ways. Don had pre-assigned students into heterogeneous groups with careful attention to the creation of "a little microcosm of the classroom" in each group. The education students gradually realized that Don's groupings had been deliberately organized. As they traded stories of group work, some education students had to admit that their initial impressions that other groups had "all the good kids" were simply wrong, leaving them to reconsider why their own groups were not working as well as they wished. Florence also pre-assigned students to groups, in somewhat the same fashion, but these groupings somehow were less dramatic as microcosms. I suspect part of the difference was that most education students who worked with Florence's classes taught the same mini-unit to two classes; these students were more struck by differences between the two groups rather than among individuals within a group. Gerry made a show of selecting groups at random from two boxes (one for boys, one for girls). Her students and education students knew that the selection showed no "ulterior" motives other than having no one-gender groups.

Ironically, as the education students entered their practica with some genuine understanding of how and why to plan and organize group work in language arts, they commonly entered classrooms (especially in high schools) where group work was not valued or used. Education students in this group, like those in my initial interviews, felt sufficiently confident of the value of group work and of their own abilities in structuring and teaching groups that given the opportunity they introduced group work into their student teaching classrooms. They noted that without the work at McKernan, they would have had neither the confidence nor the ability to do so, for in some cases it meant overcoming the resistance of cooperating teacher and students alike. Sharon, whose practicum was in a high school, told of her successful efforts:

> [The work at McKernan] made me risk trying groups in a classroom where they never used groups before because it was so successful. I thought, "Hey, if I can do it with junior high, I can do it with this group." Otherwise, I don't know that I'd have tried it because these kids [at the high school] were very sophisticated, very cool. They're used to teachers standing in front of them; they don't really want a lot of this [group work]. In fact, when I changed the desks around in the room to a circle one day, they said, "What's all this?" They didn't like it at all. . . . So when I was planning a group lesson, I kept going back to how we did it at McKernan.

Sharon felt that ultimately she won the students over to an approach that she saw as encouraging more active participation from them. Like Ursula and several others who were in high school practica, Sharon remarked on the passivity of her upper-level high school students and used group work to counter their "jaded" approach to school. The education students who introduced group work in their practicum placements all felt reaffirmed in the value of the work and their abilities to organize it.

Organizing writers workshops

While only three education students saw writers workshops in operation in their practicum placements, they all saw two writers workshops thriving at McKernan. They learned how Don and Stuart organized their classrooms physically to accommodate space for individual work and conferences and how they managed the voluminous filing and record-keeping. These are aspects of writers workshop organization that pose difficulties even for experienced teachers, so the chance to see the organizational strategies of two teachers helped education students understand that individual teachers find their own ways to organize.

From their experiences at McKernan, education students went on to incorporate writers workshops to whatever extent they were permitted in their practicum placements, with several people noting with satisfaction that their cooperating teachers had decided to continue the practice in their classrooms. In this respect these education students, like those in my initial interviews, inadvertently acted as change agents in schools. Amanda was typical of many students who noted, "Without McKernan, I wouldn't have known how to run a workshop." Although Annette, like several others, would have preferred to teach in a complete workshop style, she was flexible, using as much freedom as she was given; this flexibility, I think, was possible because of the solid grounding Annette and others had before they began student teaching.

Of the entire class, only Michael spoke of his insecurity in organizing a writers workshop. He stated a desire to move gradually to a workshop approach, fearful of plunging in without sufficient preparation. Michael had had difficulty making sense of the work that he saw in Stuart's class, because, as he said, he was not able to follow students for a longer period of time. He had also resisted journal writing, despite professing to appreciate its value. Though Michael was fearful of instituting a writers workshop, he clearly appreciated the value of personal writing, as is seen in his comments about his use of letter-writing with his student during practicum.

Students had read about mini-lessons in Nancie Atwell's book; at McKernan they saw mini-lessons in practice. Kate was especially pleased with the possibilities of mini-lessons:

> I had never thought of mini-lessons before this year--it was either a lesson or nothing. . . . When I read Atwell, I thought, "What is she talking about, mini-lesson? It's either a lesson or a non-lesson." But now, I'm really beginning to see the use of these in the classroom. . . . I can really see myself using mini-lessons.

N.M. Gordon, writing of the difficulty of implementing a process approach to writing instruction, stresses that this curricular change is made exceptionally difficult because it necessarily relies upon people rather than material resources:

> It relies on their ability to ask questions, to pace their comments, to think fast, to relate with ease and conviction to parents, to individualize instruction, to take risks and learn from mistakes, in short, to depend mainly on themselves.
>
> (1984, p.101)

In working with their university professor and McKernan teachers and children in a supportive environment, the education students learned about the structuring and implementation of writers workshops in ways that books, even such excellent ones as In the Middle, could not. A curricular innovation that places such reliance upon people resources must employ people as resources for helping other teachers to implement and understand the process as well. More importantly, in addition to learning to implement writers workshops from practitioners while at McKernan, the education students learned to see those experienced teachers as a resource network for their continuing professional development.

CHAPTER 9

TEACHER EDUCATION

What perspectives on teacher education are suggested by the work and accomplishments of participants in the McKernan project? What insights do the work and experience of these collaborators offer with regard to school and university partnerships and to educational improvement? For school and teacher education do not exist in "two solitudes." They share problems: the fragmentation of learning, the denial of a supportive professional community in favour of isolated teaching, and organizational practices impeding or at least unresponsive to life-long learning, to name a few. With shared problems, shared solutions must be explored.

Re-forming Teacher Education

The work of teachers (whether university- or school-based) and students (whether university- or school-based) in the McKernan project offers possibilities for learning in teacher education by exploiting the resources of both the university and the school as well as by off-setting or contextualizing some of the typical shortcomings of the traditional practicum experience. The resources of the university, in the presence of a professor of Secondary English Education, make available for students and teachers her broad theoretical foundation, her experience in language arts education, and her mediation of the learning situation. The resources of the school provide education students with the reality of a school context, expertise and mediation of experienced teachers, and interaction with children in a structured, gradual introduction to the roles and responsibilities of teaching.

The student teaching practicum, though often regarded by education students as the highlight of the traditional teacher education program, has shortcomings that are well-researched, well-documented, and significant for future professional attitudes and growth. While education students in this project participated in traditional practica before (for four weeks) and after (for eight weeks) their participation in the McKernan project, the McKernan work influenced their perspectives and, for many, their actions, in the subsequent practicum.

The common failures of traditional teacher education programs are cited in many calls for restructuring programs (Goodlad, 1990, 1984; Zeichner, 1992). Student teachers learn in near-isolation with one cooperating teacher. Perceived or actual requirements for conformity, evaluation pressure, and the implicit organizational message of "apprenticeship" often lead to overlearning (Schön, 1987) and serve to "wash out," in Zeichner's phrase, the voice of the university. Practices adopted as survival tactics in student teaching become for many teachers the practices that survive, as teachers have little time, energy, or support in the first hectic years of teaching to reflect upon the broader implications of their methods (Zumwalt, 1986).

University-based supervisors often fail to add the voice of the university in a significant way during the practicum. Student teachers traditionally ignore or reject advice from faculty consultants and "occasional" supervisors, as supervision is often limited and of uneven quality due to organizational and financial constraints and its low priority within the university (Zeichner, 1992). The expediencies of practicum placements provide opportunities for rural placements where, in a difficult job market, local student teachers' chances for employment are increased. These opportunities, designed to be mutually advantageous for schools, student teachers, and the university, often result in a complete absence of the university voice from practicum, as the faculty supervision role is assumed by a district administrator.

The McKernan project, however, offers a counterpoint to the pressures of student teaching. By providing multiple models of teaching, within which common philosophical stances of student-centredness and language for learning are manifest, the individual teachers and the organizational structure mitigate against conformity and overlearning. Even students who feel pressured into conformity during practicum are able to contextualize their performance, as several did by keeping journals of their unlived student teaching lives. Judy and Ruth, for example, both spoke of "living a double life" by writing in their journals their preferred teaching strategies.

Mary Catherine Bateson, discussing the work of her mother, Margaret Mead, recalls her mother's insistence upon studying another culture in triangulation with a third culture, to preclude an "us and them" outlook (1986). While many students spoke of encountering similar situations in their two practicum experiences, the McKernan work provided a third perspective, an integrated university-school perspective that precludes an "us and them" view of university and school.

In providing for nonevaluated teaching, the teachers as well as the education students in the McKernan project are free to communicate without the "artificial," as Don Garry and Gerry Bell termed it, requirement to assess the education students' performances. The formal focus for all involved could be learning and teaching language arts, despite the pervasiveness of beginning teachers' performance anxiety. Education students did not worry about possible "hidden" messages of the McKernan teachers, for there were no long-term consequences of the work, unless the education students so desired. With such freedom from evaluation pressure, a "norm of collegiality" was promoted (Little, 1987).

Marilyn Cochrane-Smith categorizes three frameworks in which school-university relationships have been re-invented: consonance (in which the school and university are consistent and re-affirming), critical dissonance (in which the university uses incongruity, seeking to foster a critical, challenging, and, ultimately, transformative perspective), and collaborative resonance (in which school and university collaborate to "create learning opportunities that are both different from and richer than the opportunities either the school or the university can provide alone") (1991, p,109). This third category neatly describes the relationship of McKernan's teachers with Marg Iveson in intention and result:

> In this conception, the goal of teacher educators is more than teaching students how to teach. It is teaching them how to continue learning in diverse school contexts by prolonging and intensifying the influences of university and school experiences, both of which are viewed as potentially liberalizing. . . . [It] aim[s] to interrupt the traditional pattern of socialization; but unlike programs designed to provoke critical dissonance, programs based on collaborative resonance simultaneously aim to capitalize on the potency of teaching culture to alter students' perspectives by creating or tapping into contexts that support student teachers' ongoing learning in the company of experienced teachers . . . .
>
> (1991, p. 109)

Cochrane-Smith notes that relationships of consonance and critical dissonance, though of opposing intentions, result in repetition and re-inforcement of conservative practice, re-affirming the maxim of experienced teachers who teach explicitly or implicitly that student teachers should "forget all that theory you learned in the university; this is the real world." With the potency of teacher socialization a concern for those interested in improving school and teacher education (Zeichner and Gore, 1990), a relationship of collaborative resonance allows the force of socialization to work positively. If teacher education is a process of enculturation, teacher educators must look carefully at the cultures into which student teachers are placed. If teacher education results in conservative practice, then teacher educators must consider which schools' practices are worth conserving, in light of current understanding of theory and pedagogy in a particular discipline, when sending student teachers to schools.

However, in large faculties of education such "philosophically correct" practicum placements are not always feasible. In such situations, experience of a collaborative-resonance relationship somewhere in the program serves not only to model positive contexts and possibilities, but it also provides a counterpoint for other school contexts. As with Marg Iveson's students, when told "students can't learn this" or "don't trust students," education students have a filter through which to process such maxims; they see clear evidence and hear other teachers' voices telling them, as McKernan teachers do, that their students are capable, eager, and worthy of respect.

Sadly (and perhaps predictably, perhaps even deservedly) for teacher educators, the voices with the most credibility for education students are those of teachers in schools rather than universities, for the university professor is often branded "idealistic" and "unrealistic," a suspicious informant whose experience is easily discounted. Zeichner notes student teachers' "excessive realism." A junior high school teacher's personal anecdote illustrates the point: with fifteen years teaching experience, he was appointed to a two-year university position as a practicum associate teaching undergraduate curriculum-and-instruction courses. Two months into his appointment, he was told by student teachers (with four weeks of teaching experience) that his student-centred approaches were "too idealistic to work in the real world." The teacher asked in exasperation, "What world do they think I've been teaching in for the last fifteen years?" For this teacher and others, presence within the university confers, rather than a "halo effect," what may politely be called a "pitchfork effect."

In dealing with the harsh realities of contemporary education, however, perhaps the best course is not to shield beginning students from the negative voices of excessive realism, of jaded experience, for those voices are heard in many staff rooms. A "survival skill" of a beginning teacher is to recognize those voices for what they are rather than to accept them uncritically, to place them into broader contexts of the social and educational world of the school.

Schools, particularly for beginning teachers, are places of perpetual and unexamined motion, without time, guidance, or encouragement for reflection. One limitation of the model of "the reflective practitioner," as some programs have borrowed the phrasing from Donald Schön, is that beginning teachers are left to "reflect" in isolation in their classrooms, bereft of social, experiential, or pedagogical context in which to situate reflection. At McKernan School, the experiences and learning of the education students are mediated by Marg Iveson and by the school teachers.

Lev Vygotsky's famous maxim "What a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow" (1986, p.188) informs Marg Iveson's work, the McKernan teachers' work, and their collaboration. Together they provide a mediated learning experience for education students, with structured and varied experiences, with guidance and support. Marg is flexible in structuring learning experiences within her limitations--a prohibition on full-class teaching or evaluated teaching, scheduled work for each education student with at least two teachers, and an effort to have each student working with writers workshop in some capacity--conditions which pose no difficulties for the McKernan teachers. As was discussed earlier, the teachers' structuring of learning experiences varied, providing a broad range of experiences.

Guidance and support are key elements, available on an ad hoc basis, of the mediation of Marg and the McKernan teachers. Whether Don was responding to an education student's poem, Marg was guiding the planning of a mini-unit, Florence was helping Dave put his "failure" with a group activity into perspective, Stuart was congratulating Barbara on her success with a reluctant writer, or Gerry was helping Arlene be herself with the students, the guidance and support was gentle, positive, and served to extend the education student's understanding through questioning, advising, reassuring, or just providing a model of a teacher who enjoyed working with students.

Questioning by an experienced guide is vital to a mediated learning experience (Sternberg and Caruso, 1985), and Marg, in structuring "group leader" roles, or more accurately, in structuring to prevent traditional roles of teacher and student, implicitly challenged the traditional, often tacitly understood conceptions of those roles. More directly, she questioned, "nudged," and offered resources for exploration of new ideas and directions. In the capacity of "questioner," my role as researcher provided an extension of Marg's role. By the nature of my work, I was asking questions that, in some cases, led to extended thinking, as in discussing literature with Dave or in asking Christine to clarify her comments about writing workshop "working" in junior high and university but not in high schools. The questioner helps the student make tacit understandings explicit, for only by doing so can tacit knowledge be opened to analysis (Polanyi, 1958).

In structuring the on-going project with McKernan teachers, Marg Iveson's curriculum-and-instruction courses do not "reform" the practicum; the work at McKernan exists comfortably within the structural and organizational framework of the program for secondary-route education students at the university. In the understanding of education students, however, the McKernan project has the effect of "re-forming" subsequent practicum experience, as the counterpoint of the McKernan experience--sometimes harmonious with their practica and sometimes quite discordant--provides a means to a richer perspective than the practicum alone provides.

School and University Partnerships

The concerns of teacher education are integral to efforts to improve schooling at all levels. John Goodlad (1984) emphasizes that school improvement must be a school-by-school process). Terrence Deal's (1986) analogy to the Wizard of Oz suggests that educators must look within ourselves and our schools for strengths rather than continue to rely upon "educational wizards" to grant our wishes. Given the failure of top-down innovations to substantially alter fundamental problems in education, the advice of Goodlad and Deal seems logical. Potential and actual improvements in education can occur when schools and universities join together in partnership. The McKernan project provides confirmation of the potential for mutual benefit when each partner shares resources.

Potential for educational improvements

The partnership of school and university at McKernan School offers both a model of and membership within a professional community. Rather than being socialized into isolation, education students are welcomed into a diverse community whose members demonstrate affectionate respect for each other and their students and whose resources--both material and experiential--are offered for their use immediately and in the future. The community includes secondary teachers and the university professor; this is in marked contrast to many schools where the representative of the university is considered an outsider, given a cup of coffee but not invited to participate in genuine discussions.

The McKernan project offers tangible support for lifelong learning, as experienced teachers discuss their efforts to incorporate new methods in their teaching. They openly regard Marg and her students as resources for their own continuing learning. Their interest in working in partnership with Marg demonstrates their willingness to work in uncharted ways, to experiment with roles and structures.

University and school partnerships are often discussed in terms of their potential for professional development (Little, 1986); this development is often linked to the notion of university partners acting consciously or unconsciously as change agents. (Interestingly, little is mentioned of the school personnel acting as change agents for the university, perhaps as a result of who generally writes accounts of such partnerships.) The question of the McKernan project as a vehicle of professional development can be approached in several ways.

In some senses, the McKernan project clearly is a training ground for change agents, as the education students have demonstrated, not only later in time in their own classrooms, but more immediately in their practicum placements as they negotiated for clearance to introduce new methods into their practicum classrooms. Education students repeatedly noted that without the work at McKernan, they would not have persisted in requesting permission to introduce methods outside of their cooperating teachers' practices; they also routinely reported their cooperating teachers' satisfaction with the teaching and organizing that resulted from these negotiations. This satisfaction is borne out in the positive evaluations of the cooperating teachers.

Those education students who thus negotiated with cooperating teachers took great risks, risk-taking which is not commonly associated with student teaching. Not all student teachers felt that such negotiation was possible, of course; it seems reasonable to assume that some were correct in fearing negative evaluations had they pushed their cooperating teachers harder. However, the role of beginning teacher as change agent was presented forcefully to the class at the end of the term when a guest speaker who was a school personnel officer advised that his district hired beginning teachers to be change agents in the district's aging teacher population. For many class members, that knowledge was reassuring, as it suggested support for the methods they wanted to use.

Carolyn Heilbrun defines power as

> the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter. This is true in the Pentagon, in marriage, in friendships, and in politics.
>
> (1988, p.18)

And in the staff room, she might have added. Many of these education students, despite their apprentice status in the practicum, felt empowered to speak in their staff rooms and to their cooperating teachers and expect that their ideas mattered. The work with school students, not the textbook readings or university classwork, supported their confidence in the methods they proposed to introduce into their practicum classrooms.

The question of professional development in terms of the teachers at McKernan School enters into the work of the McKernan project. In discussing with Marg Iveson the possibilities of working together, McKernan principal Don Vinge was interested in supporting his teachers to develop their efforts with a language for learning philosophy statement, itself a professional development task. Marg Iveson's discussions with the teachers focused on the teachers' ideas for work they could do with additional adults with language arts expertise in their classrooms. The teachers initially focused upon work that could be done better with additional adults rather than with only one teacher. Their motivation was not strictly professional development, but the dual benefits of contributing to teacher education and structuring positive learning experiences for their students.

But for at least one teacher, Don Garry, the partnership took on a professional development dimension that fundamentally influenced his teaching practice. While Don initially opted not to participate in the McKernan project because he regarded it as intrusive, by the third year of the project (his second year of particpation), he saw the project as being extremely beneficial for both his students and the education students. In the project's third year, his emphasis shifted to work (in the structuring of the "sentence demon" project) that he would not have attempted without additional adults in his classroom. The "sentence demon" group work marked a mid-phase in a transition in Don's teaching of grammar skills, as he shifted from decontextualized grammar drills to grammar instruction integrated within the context of students' writing. After reading my account of the "sentence demon" work in his classroom, Don remarked that he felt that work had helped him to "exorcise" his own grammar demons in teaching.

In the second year of the project, as Don introduced a writers workshop approach in his class, he became convinced of the benefits of additional readers for his students' work. By the third year, Don's writers workshop had acquired a sophistication and organization that the education students studied with great interest; the "spontaneous curriculum," in Marg's phrase, of Don's writing conferencing with the education students provided tremendous value to them but also, as Don noted, re-confirmed his belief in the value of that approach to writing instruction and assisted him in developing his skills in discussing other adults' writing. The work that year provoked additional work in the fourth and fifth year, as Don later structured opportunities for classroom publications of work done in partnership with education students. In the fourth and fifth years of the project, Don also began to contribute to a broad professional dialogue by speaking at professional conferences about his work with the education students and his own students and by teaching in-service sessions on writers workshops.

In discussing the effects of the McKernan project on his professional development, Don attributed the writing conferences he had with these education students as being instrumental to his on-going development as a teacher and writer. Those writing conferences were the first he had had with adult writers; they proved for him that, though the response of adults is more mature, the techniques of writing conferences are the same for adult or adolescent writers. He traced his leadership in the formation of a teachers-as-writers group and his in-service sessions on writers workshops back to those writing conferences with education students. He also noted that several of those former education students have become teachers who are writing partners with whom he discusses his own writing.

There are also implications for the teaching practice of Marg Iveson in the McKernan project. The partnership with McKernan School is one means by which she fulfills her teaching mandate in, as she states, an integrated manner which highlights unity of theory and practice and which helps her students contextualize any dissonance that may exist between their education courses and the practicum experiences of students. It also prevents her in two ways from suffering the "reverse halo" effect of rejection of university teaching: first, the integrated approach to language arts which the Alberta Junior High School Curriculum Guide advocates is accorded the validity of school practice as opposed to "university theory," and, second, Marg's interactions with school teachers and children, accord her in the eyes of her students a validity they deny to many university professors. In terms of her professional understanding, she notes that the work at McKernan reminds her constantly of the daily life of schools, where occasionally students are uncooperative and occasionally administrative details become interruptive.

As Don Vinge noted, school and university partnerships "must be and must be seen by participants to be win-win situations." The partnership of the McKernan project offers benefits seen in other partnership projects, in terms of modelling of positive aspects of excellent schools, such as a sense of community with a commitment to lifelong learning and the potential for professional development, both in the long term view of teacher education and in the immediate view of the particular teachers in a school.

Partnership concerns

In participating in partnerships with schools, teacher educators have looked for signs of successful schools, school cultures in which teacher socialization can be regarded as a positive force, cultures in which beginning teachers can take their first professional steps with support and experienced teachers can continue to grow. Rosenholtz (1989) characterizes schools as moving or stuck, according to characteristics which contribute to or detract from the intellectual and social climate. Little (1982), also studying the school as a workplace, stresses that successful schools have a norm of collegiality, with a professional community that talks about teaching, plans with and encourages other members, and articulates a coherent philosophy of its teaching. Administrative support and recognition for successes adds another key component to successful schools. Clearly, in this light, McKernan School is a moving, successful school.

Zeichner (1992), however, argues that partnerships with schools ought not to be limited to "finished" schools, in which the partnership risks the danger of elitism. If the partnership school is seen as "too wonderful to be replicated," the potential for change is limited. He advocates partnering with "unfinished" schools, with obvious struggles and failings.

Though McKernan School is seen by the education students as a highly successful, possibly even a "finished" school by Zeichner's view, the McKernan teachers and administrators took pains to present the school as evolving and their work as continuing both individually and as a school. The education students, because of their shorter stay at McKernan, were not as attuned to the broader operation of the school as they later were at their practicum schools. Their views on the success of the school were largely influenced by their contact with language arts teachers. The education students did not assume that the successful qualities they admired in McKernan language arts classes could not be duplicated, as was evidenced by their efforts in their practica to introduce new methods.

Recognition of teaching excellence is another quality that successful schools share, a quality that has been evident in the McKernan project. For Don Vinge, the partnership has been one way to ensure recognition for his staff as he provides a high profile for the project both within the school and when communicating with parents. The contribution to teacher education, which was foremost in the minds of the teachers when they began to work with Marg to develop ideas has been confirmed and strengthened, as Don Vinge noted:

> Our staff have developed a unique pride in the quality of the work that they have been doing as they shared it with themselves as colleagues, with the university faculty, and with students. . . . I think that we feel more responsible today in helping to improve teacher education, in being an actual partner in that, than we did three years ago, when we started this.

The organizational details of the McKernan project require flexibility on all sides as well as administrative support. From the university side, Marg attempts to minimize the organizational inconvenience for teachers by making frequent short visits to the school when she can meet with teachers during their free time to prepare for her students' arrival. In the third year of the project, this organizational time amounted to roughly fifty hours, which were possible to schedule only because of the school's proximity to her home and the university and because of her flexible working hours on campus. One problem in successful partnership projects has been the labour intensity of the work, a problem which can potentially cause burn-out for those involved.

The administrative support from McKernan School has been constant throughout the project, as Don Vinge has made release time available for teachers to plan with education students or to meet together to plan with Marg for the following year. During the weeks of the project, he puts the school's resources at the disposal of the education students and frequently joins in staff room discussion with the education students.

The duration of the education students' visit has varied from year to year, from one week in the first year to four weeks in the fifth year of the project. Marg and the school teachers have been unanimous in their estimation that greater benefits result from an extended stay than a one-day visit to a school. The confidence of the education students that they are indeed part of the professional community could not be established in a one-day visit, the teachers agree, nor could the education students' growth in adjusting their pedagogical approaches to individuals.

Organizational and administrative details that are determined by circumstance may have interesting consequences in the partnership. For example, in the first two years of the project, the education students were located in the library, an arrangement which tended to disrupt classes somewhat. In the third year, the education students shared the staff room with teachers, while in the fourth and fifth years the education students occupied a classroom as their home base. Trade-offs occurred in the various arrangements between teacher-student interaction, sense of belonging in the school, and space to leave papers and personal belongings. Each arrangement has benefits and shortcomings for staff and students.

In the third year of the project, the question of a choice between a school-based or a university-based integrated program for the education students was moot, as no other section of the integrated program was offered that term. In other years (when the project has run in January), education students have had an option. Needless to say, for the purposes of my research, the lack of choice for the students simplified certain issues; for example, in other years, one may wonder whether education students who opt to work or not to work with school students in a pre-practicum course have different orientations to teaching or simply different work schedules.

Another change in the third year was the timing of the project, which ran at the end of September rather than in January as it had in the previous two years. The teachers found the pre-project planning extremely difficult, as they were busy with the usual re-schedulings and commotion of the start of the school year. They all appreciated the opportunity to observe their new students as the education students taught in groups, but all agreed that the organization was easier to manage when the school year was already in full swing. Marg's schedule at the university can normally accommodate this arrangement.

Professional development schemes imposed by administrators have a tremendous failure rate, and Don Vinge was conscious of long-term benefits of voluntary participation despite the slower beginning to the project. For the teachers, the voluntary nature of participation was significant. Although two of the teachers generally do not serve as cooperating teachers for practicum, the McKernan project allows them to contribute to teacher education in significant ways, on their own terms.

A reader might by this point begin to wonder whether significant problems were encountered in the working of the project. During the course of this research, I encountered no problems that jeopardized the harmony of purpose and working relationships of the participants. The focus of this study, of course, was not the identification of problems but the possibilities for learning; even so, I believe I would have recognized significant problems had there been any.

Should this type of partnership be duplicated for all disciplines in teacher education? The direct answer is that it cannot be. The extent to which this project or similar ones are feasible depends upon individuals in universities and schools discovering and developing common goals. Certainly, such partnerships involve trade-offs. There is never enough time for teachers to accomplish all they want to with classes, a constraint felt at the university as well as in schools. However, teachers and professors choose to structure classes according to their fundamental beliefs about what experiences are valuable for their students. The participants in the McKernan project have chosen in the past years to increase its duration, a choice reflecting their beliefs about the value of the work they accomplish with university and junior high school students during that time.

Cooperation and/or collaboration

As educators in schools and universities have become convinced of the desirability of working together, they look for ways and means of forming partnerships that are mutually beneficial. As Don Vinge noted, schools and universities have been wrong in the past--universities have exploited schools, and schools have blamed all the woes of teacher education on the universities. He sees collaborative ventures as the means of future school improvement.

Marg Iveson and Don Vinge see their partnership in terms of collaboration, both of them conscious of the implications of the structuring of their work. Don attributed much of the success of the development of the project to Marg's sensitivity and "internalizing the concept of collaboration." He recalled his own and his teachers' earlier understanding of collaboration:

> I think that I saw lots of negotiations and lots of compromise, and so forth. It shocked people to have them realize that, on the whole in this project, the [education] students could do what the McKernan staff asked them to do. Everyone expected a few more givens, a few more restraints, a few more parameters laid down with regard to the project. I think that if that had been the case, the joint ownership would not be as strong today. . . . In this case, the interests of the teachers were paramount almost, in the assignments given to the education students--it was a difficult thing for them to realize initially. It empowered them, if you will. In future projects, either this one or others, they will act differently next time around.

He asserted that joint ownership would not have developed in a cooperative (as opposed to collaborative) venture. Don Vinge saw cooperation as a lack of shared goals, with resultant limitation of intention and result:

> I think it's natural, that if somebody has a plan for you, . . . you sit back and you say, "Okay, it's your idea, we'll let you give it a try." As a result, too, that implementation or that activity often gets carried out unaltered en route, because there isn't any joint ownership. Whereas, in this project with the degree of communication that exists between Marg and the staff before, during and after, there is on-going correction; there is a sort of formative evaluation which is continuing to keep the project on target. And the bulls-eye keeps being moved a little bit, not a lot, but enough to give people the satisfaction to work together, and the motivation is genuine.

Marg Iveson also spoke of joint ownership in the sense of shared goals in collaborative projects. She distinguished between cooperation and collaboration:

> I think the difference is in the words themselves: cooperation means it's an operation that happens together, a kind of parallelism to two people or two companies, or more than two, somehow going in parallel. Collaboration contains the word "labour," and it is working together. It's not a sense of parallel at all --it's a sense of togetherness. So I see shared goals, interest and concern for the other people who are labouring. There's a common direction in that sort of situation. Cooperative activities can happen one after another to some bigger goal, but collaborative activities happen together. I think to be collaborative we have to appreciate each other's differences, strengths, needs, agendas. Collaborative relationships are usually non-authoritative, and personally, I'm attracted to those kinds of activities more than other kinds of activities. I like to work with people; I learn a lot in those circumstances; I enjoy the social aspect of working together. Sometimes that means I go away and do a specific job, but I do like that shared sense of a project or relationship or idea.

For both of these catalysts for the project, faith in the idea of collaboration meant at times that a somewhat passive stance was best for long-term success. For Don, that meant not requiring teachers to participate in the project. For Marg, that meant not suggesting a full agenda of ideas for fitting education students into the teachers' classes. For Marg, it meant abandoning the "shadow day" in the third year of the project, despite its clear value for education students, because one teacher felt it to be inconvenient. The restraint paid dividends by the third year, by which time the teachers began to assume more control in planning and implementing the project. As John Goodlad (1984) cautions, change takes time, and results only begin to show in three to five years. By the fourth and fifth years of the project, the joint ownership was more than well-entrenched, as Don Garry assumed planning coordination from Don Vinge, and additional teachers began to participate. By the fifth year, Marg's class was situated at McKernan for four of the six weeks of the integrated coursework, in response to teachers' requests for longer periods of time.

Pedagogy of Language Arts Education

In working with teachers and students at McKernan School, education students preparing to be English teachers work with, in Nancie Atwell's phrase, "time, ownership, and response." Time, though they are only present in the school for several weeks, is more abundant than in student teaching, allowing for talk and reflection that are conspicuously absent from many practica. Ownership of work with students, ownership of their writing, and ownership of intentions for learning characterize the work of the project. Response is readily available--from school students, peers, experienced secondary teachers, and the university professor--and all contribute to their growing understanding of students and language arts.

In claiming the need for a theory of language pedagogy, Arthur Applebee (1987) notes that educators have an understanding of language learning and an understanding of classrooms as social environments, but the two areas need to be brought together. O'Donnell (1991) also notes the lack of research in language arts and teacher education combined. Such a theory is likely rooted in our understanding of language learning and teaching.

Jane Hansen (1987) argues for natural language learning and teaching in reading and writing classrooms, in which classrooms should operate in accordance with the ways children learn language. Children use language frequently, deciding what they want to say, and adults respond with interest to the content rather than the structure of their language. Children interact with many adults, who serve as models of language users.

Much the same may be said of the work of education students and teachers at McKernan School. The centrality of language to learning is reflected in this project in language arts teacher education, which integrates language strands and provides opportunities for language to be used in all forms. As children learn language by meaningful participation in a language-rich environment, so do the education students learn about language arts education by participating in a rich environment focused upon language arts education.

As language arts is a student-centred discipline, so in the McKernan project is language arts education a student-centred discipline, with intentionality respected. The students focus upon their greatest needs: the need to integrate their teacher, student, and individual selves harmoniously in order to interact comfortably and sensibly as teachers with children; the need to develop confidence and expertise in language arts education; and the need to learn about children. Student-centred teaching involves opportunities and support for learning by encouraging and rewarding risk-taking, by structuring experiences, and by offering resources and expert modelling. In the McKernan project, education students are welcomed into a supportive professional community in which they have power to contribute to the discourse.

CHAPTER 10

VISTAS

Perspective changes with position and distance. This dissertation began with Donald Schön's metaphor of the dichotomy between the high, hard ground of professional education and the swampy lowland of professional practice. Having completed my exploration of the McKernan project, which links the high, hard ground of theory with the swampy lowlands of school context, I attempt to achieve my own perspective by looking from a distance both backward at the understandings developed through my research and forward to future possibilities. Viewed from a distance, the high, hard ground and the swampy lowland can be encompassed in a single vista.

When the professional education of teachers is decontextualized from school practice, a failure of comprehensive vision, a lack of perspective, can result in both locales. In studying the McKernan project, my purpose has been to evoke the culture created by the participants in this project during the Fall term, 1989, and to discover what they learned about learning and teaching language arts. By working with their university professor, school teachers, and children in a school context in supportive and guided teaching and learning experiences, education students have the opportunity to integrate theory in practice. Working with at least two teachers, education students plan and evaluate units that they teach to small groups as well as work individually with students in writers workshops. Their teaching is non-evaluated, and university course assignments, such as a writing portfolio, support and extend the work they do in the school.

The culture, or "webs of significance," created by the project participants was a professional community with threads extending both to university and school. This community, as modelled by the university professor and school teachers and administrators, explicitly valued and demonstrated their valuation of language as a means of supporting and extending thought, diversity of and respect for children and colleagues, lifelong learning, and risk-taking. The community supported one another's learning by sharing resources, their understanding of which included people as well as material resources. Having been welcomed into such a professional community, the education students came to share these explicit values. They developed understandings of the intricacies of structuring their teaching to develop opportunities to use language for learning and to organize in student-centred ways. They wove their own threads into the webs of significance of their professional community.

Implications for the Education of Language Arts Teachers

Having woven both warp and weft of the McKernan project--the warp of participants' narratives and the weft of interlacing themes and issues--I look back upon a tapestry of depth and texture. The McKernan project, though a loom threaded specifically for the education of language arts teachers, suggests implications for teacher education in other disciplines as well. Programs for the professional education of teachers, regardless of structuring of practicum and coursework, could profit by incorporating various features of the McKernan project.

The McKernan project is predicated upon a view of the centrality of language to all learning. Language development in school parallels that of the young child's development of language within the family circle, with individual, social, and cultural influences and responses at work and play. Our understanding of language development requires us to respect purpose and meaning-making, to consider processes and students as well as skills.

Believing that language supports learning, teacher educators must surround education students with language in many forms and for many purposes, helping them understand the importance of a language-rich environment in their learning in diverse disciplines. Interactions of expressive, transactional, and poetic language support and extend learning about children, teaching, and language arts when the context includes children, teachers, and language arts. Immersion in the language of the discipline supports and extends learning in the discipline. In language arts, for example, education students learn about learning and teaching writing by writing in varied forms and for varied audiences as members of a writing community.

All learners deserve opportunities to have their learning supported before it is evaluated. Such supportive situations for education students are oriented toward learning to teach rather than teaching performance, as evaluation of teaching performance colours and constrains the honest communication possible between evaluator and student teacher. Given the intense performance pressure that beginning teachers perceive, regardless of the actual evaluation or lack thereof, they need no external pressure in these first teaching situations to detract further from their focus on students and learning. Journal writing, much discussed in recent years as a means of promoting qualities of reflection in practice, provides opportunities for exploration and extension of thought. Just as education students need opportunities for non-evaluated teaching, so do they need opportunities for non-evaluated learning to allow a genuine focus upon learning. With graded journals, invariably some students will fabricate journals for grades; for these, regardless of the grade awarded, the focus is upon the subterfuge rather than a genuine exploration of thought.

These initial non-evaluated teaching situations ought to include individual and small-group teaching situations but exclude full-class teaching. Again, the purpose is to keep the focus clearly on students and learning rather than on crowd control. In subsequent student teaching circumstances, full-class teaching can be (and should be) incorporated as an education student approaches full professional responsibility.

Much has been written of the "gap" between theory and practice, as university learning often suggests teaching practices contradictory to common practices in schools. In preparing language arts teachers, we offer a vision of development and education that is often foreign and, occasionally, antithetical to their experiences as students in language arts classes. If the two solitudes of university and school are to be bridged, these new language arts teachers need learning experiences to supplement the experiences of their schooling, to help them consider new roles for language arts teachers. In many cases, we are asking education students to make a paradigm shift tantamount to a leap of faith when we advocate process approaches and student-centred teaching. We need to help them answer to their own satisfaction the question "Where is the teacher in student-centred learning?"

To support this shift in understanding sufficiently to support implementation in the classroom, education students need a theoretical foundation, experiences with their own learning, and experiences with children in an environment in which the theoretical foundation is shared. Texts alone cannot support this understanding, nor can texts combined with experience on the university level, for the perpetual scepticism of university students demands proof that what is true for them as adults is also true and manageable for children in schools.

Context is a powerful mediator of knowledge, so education students need to learn theory within contexts that include schools, children, and teachers. Whatever is learned in a university context is considered, to a great extent, university learning, and there is a strong scepticism in society and schools about the "ivory-tower university." So, for example in language arts education, writers workshop at the university risks being perceived only in the university context of adult, motivated learners, limited and confined to that context; the university professor's word that it can and does work with younger writers and less mature learners has little force to compete with a cooperating teacher who says that it cannot and does not. Education students must experience the school context in ways that we cannot ensure will happen in the practicum.

These initial experiences of school contexts ought to be in schools in which current understanding of learning and teaching, in general and in particular disciplines, is valued and reflected to some degree. A utopian school is not needed, and is probably not desirable even if available, but the school staff should be willing to engage in discussion about their evolving practice and the theoretical underpinnings of that practice. The teaching experiences ought to be structured and mediated for education students to encourage awareness of the relationships between the immediacies of the school context and the theoretical foundations upon which the context is defined and acted out.

These supportive teaching experiences must be in genuine contexts, with real students in their schools studying real concepts, not in artificial situations or with artificial lesson plans. In such genuine contexts, education students can begin to learn to plan realistically. The experiences should be of sufficient duration to allow the education students to come to know their groups of students and the school teachers. With such understanding, they can learn to adjust their pedagogy to better suit the students. One-day visits, while useful for many purposes, do not facilitate the same confidence or participation in a professional community, nor do they provide opportunities to learn flexibility in pedagogy.

Multiple models of teachers provide broad exposure to individual styles and beliefs to help beginning teachers appreciate the possibility of integrating their unique personalities with their roles as teachers. Given the primacy of focus upon personal growth in one's perception of self-as-teacher, multiple models of excellent teachers reinforce the understanding that one's individuality is essential to one's teaching. Working with several teachers within one school context also provides a strong message that a teacher can shape and control his or her teaching within a single context rather than simply adapt oneself to a given school context, which is the message many student teachers receive during practicum.

Language arts education students are especially in need of multiple models of experienced teachers if they are to learn process approaches to teaching. Process approaches to reading and writing instruction rely heavily upon the sensitivity, subtlety, and resources of the individual teacher; if beginning language arts teachers are to develop such attributes and resources, they must learn from experienced practitioners. They must have multiple models of teachers talking with students about writing; they need to see different individual approaches in order to develop their own. Skill in handling writing conferences requires personal risk, even for experienced teachers; this risk must be supported and mediated for the beginning teacher.

The benefits of multiple models in teacher education hold true regardless of the excellence of any single cooperating teacher in practicum. Moreover, where practicum placements are not positive for education students, the students can be helped to contextualize the placements and to learn whatever will be of benefit in those particular placements if they have additional models for reference. Callbacks to the university during practicum and visits from university supervisors can help to some extent but cannot offer the potent counterpoint of other teaching experiences in more positive situations. This counterpoint is especially important in regional placements, where the contacts between school and university during practicum are more limited.

While working within a school context with supported, mediated initial teaching experiences offers clear benefits in the education of beginning teachers, such school-university partnerships offer benefits to the school as well. Teacher education is the province of schools and school improvement is the province of teacher education programs, both immediately and longterm. Working collaboratively, universities and schools can offer integrated models of praxis in education; such collaboration requires bifocal vision to achieve perspective, allowing the vision of both parties to converge on educational improvement in both locales. Working in partnership, universities and schools offer both a model of and a means of sustaining a professional community which is inclusive and welcoming.

Partnerships between school and university offer possibilities for professional development for school staff. Teachers have opportunities for on-going support and additional expertise in attempting curricular innovations. By adding less experienced voices to the discussion of teaching, such partnerships provide opportunities for experienced teachers to articulate their philosophies in broad terms and in the details of daily decision making, thus providing a context for using language for learning for the teachers as well as the students. In partnerships such as the McKernan project, the university professor's support for professional development extends to encouraging teachers to discuss their work in the larger professional community, through participation at conferences and professional meetings.

The issues in and difficulties of forming, developing, and sustaining such partnerships are many, and successful endeavors require accommodation and sensitivity from both parties. Partnerships require intense commitment over time from key people, a commitment which must be tempered with patience to accommodate gestation of ideas and ownership.

Given successful partnerships, what issues must be addressed to continue their success? The history of successful partnerships and innovative programs in teacher education shows that the intense commitment of individuals is difficult to sustain over time due to the additional workload and energy required for organization and implementation of such undertakings. This problem, to be overcome, must be acknowledged and responded to sensitively by administrators from both school and university, as must the question of succession when key organizers leave their positions. If successful partnerships are generally those instigated by committed individuals, what happens when a second person attempts to step in as a key participant or organizer?

When partnerships are successful, what pressures for dissemination must be addressed? Given the desire for "quick fixes," in education as in other fields, the temptation is always to attempt to duplicate solutions. However, successful partnerships require shared goals, which must be developed by the active participants rather than mandated by program and policy decisions. What possibilities exist for school-university partnerships that are institutionalized, given the personal flavour of successful models? Similarly, personal issues must be addressed in discontinuing successful partnerships. Presumably partners will eventually need to go their separate ways, as they develop goals which may no longer be mutually compatible. Participants must address options of continuation with different personnel or marking completion of the relationship with affirmation of its contribution to those involved.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research suggests additional questions worth investigation. My study was grounded in a particular context and time. As with all research in context, the ever-changing contexts offer different insights, different issues, and different triumphs; studies of other specific contexts of collaboration in education will offer valuable detailing of other possibilities and structures in various disciplines.

Longitudinal studies of partnerships in education offer possibilities for gaining a greater sense of the life cycles of partnerships, which may in turn suggest how to derive greater benefits during various phases of the life cycles.

Longitudinal studies of education students and inservice teachers involved in partnership projects offer a more comprehensive understanding of the possible longterm influence of participation in collaborative ventures, both in terms of classroom practice and professional leadership. As education students schooled in experiences of collaborative ventures advance in the teaching profession to positions of responsibility for the preparation of new teachers, what will be the longterm impact upon teacher education and collaborative ventures?

School students are the unacknowledged partners in teacher education; when schools and universities join together to improve education, school children are affected in many ways. A study of school children who work with education students in school-university partnerships is essential to reveal the influence of such programs upon the students and their influence upon the education students. As indicated earlier in this document, I have unreported data from school students in this particular project; this information, combined with comments of the school teachers and principal, suggests that school students have fairly sophisticated perceptions of their work with education students and of the help that they can offer to beginning teachers. In working with education students as group leaders and "expert friends," do they to some degree become overt partners in teacher education as well? Does the blurring of roles inherent in the McKernan project encourage school students to reconsider or expand their traditional relationships with the adults in school? Needless to say, this research would be difficult to structure with sensitivity to the needs of the project participants; it must be unobtrusive for the education students and school students alike.

The education students in my study experienced several planning styles and structures, which, despite some frustrations, they reported as having helped them develop their understanding of and skills in lesson and unit planning. Previous research has suggested that beginning teachers call upon different resources and understandings than do experienced competent teachers when they plan. Further studies of learning to plan lessons and units in language arts and other disciplines could provide insights into the development of particular strategies and sophisticated understandings of various considerations underlying planning.

As schools and universities develop and explore new relationships with shared goals in educational improvement, researchers will need to study these new relationships and the new structures that support them. In focusing upon research in such contexts, researchers may also need to develop new relationships and new structures to support their roles in the shared goals of educators. Researchers who are interested in emancipatory research have already begun to define some of the areas of redefined roles and relationships. More can be done in this regard to ensure that research contributes to educational improvement in addition to studying educational problems and conditions.

More specifically, the role of researcher as questioner, for example, might be further explored. What are potential additional uses and implications of this role for supporting and extending the language environment of the participants? What redefinitions and reconceptualizations of researchers' roles are possible and desirable, and how will these reconceptualized roles affect the understandings that grow from such research?

The question of anonymity will figure prominently in increasing numbers of studies in which informants and participants will choose not to accept the protection of researchers. Particularly in school-university collaborative efforts, where teachers may be full partners in the research process and product, anonymity will need to be considered in new ways. Ultimately, the question will remain one of power: if researchers must protect the vulnerable, what is our obligation to those who are not made vulnerable by our work? This is not a matter that researchers can determine alone; we must speak openly with teachers about their needs for support and protection, as well as their needs for rewards. Decisions must be joint reflections of the requirements of all the parties to the research.

Vistas: From the High Ground to the Swamp and Back Again

As much of my thinking about teacher education has been framed in Donald Schön's metaphor of the high, hard ground and the swampy lowland, it seems fitting that I conclude this document by returning to the metaphor. I now also see the metaphor as appropriate for research--the high ground of "pure, impersonal" research and the swampy lowland of research contextualized in school settings. Certainly, I feel that I have journeyed to the swampy lowland, not only as companion to the education students, but also in my own right as a researcher. Emerging, mosquito-bitten and wheezing from asthma, I am happy to have made the trip.

As a metaphor of professional practice, Schön's description seems more apt than ever. Swamps do contain the problems of greatest human interest, but they also contain more "context" than most of us can attend to at any given moment. For the inexperienced traveller, the context is all-consuming, but, in attending to the context, the inexperienced traveller misses the view and misses much of the surrounding life of the swamp.

In many nature preserves, there are swampy lowlands on exhibition for interested naturalists to observe plants and animal life. Visitors walk on wooden boardwalks constructed above the water and mud. They are close enough to reach out and touch the life they observe. They are protected, but not completely; in fact, they cannot help but get wet, as the boardwalk is invariably under water in some places during the course of a day. So, they get their feet wet, they are brushed by leaves along the walkway, and they are bitten by mosquitoes. They also, however, learn about the real life of the swamp and how the plants and animals form a whole, complex system teeming with life.

Our education students need to walk into the swamp during their professional education. For their first encounters, however, they need the support of a boardwalk. They need to be in the swamp but not be engulfed by it, not be gasping for breath. A boardwalk supports them, helps them see beyond the immediate and look out over the scene to survey the larger picture of the swamp and the land beyond.

We speak often in education of "scaffolding" learning for students. The McKernan project provides a boardwalk, a scaffolding for the learning of the education students. With the support and mediation of university professor and school teachers, education students learn about children and about language arts learning and teaching. By uniting the visions afforded by the university with the visions afforded by the rich and immediate context of the school, education students gain a richer, more balanced perspective than either setting in isolation can offer.

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